

Volunteers-In-Parks Program

VIP Program Assessment Report

February 2007



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE
Executive Summary	2—19
Summary of Internal Surveys & External Survey Cross-Walk Questions	
▪ Demographics from Internal Survey	20—23
▪ The Initial Nine Internal Survey Questions	24—27
▪ Recruitment	28—34
▪ Recruitment Marketing, Reporting/Information Technology	35—39
▪ Volunteer Newsletter	40
▪ Training	41—47
▪ Feedback, Recognition & Supervision	48—53
▪ Safety	54—55
▪ Funding Resources & FTE Allocation	56—59
External Survey	
▪ Overview of survey process	60—62
▪ Demographics	63—66
▪ Attracting/Retaining Volunteers	66—69
▪ Volunteer Recruitment & Training	70—72
▪ Leading/Managing/Supporting Volunteer Programs	72—74
▪ Overall Volunteer Experience	75—76
Overview of Themes From Survey Comments	77—96

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary is organized to present a high-level overview of the National Park Service (NPS) Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) survey report. This summary is organized to describe the (1) purpose and scope of the VIP program evaluation, (2) conclusions, (3) recommendations and (4) summary of key findings.

PURPOSE OF SCOPE OF THE VIP PROGRAM EVALUATION

VIP PROGRAM EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of assessing the Volunteer-In-Parks (VIP) Program as stated in the original scope of work¹ was to perform a servicewide evaluation in order to provide the National Park Service with an important opportunity to assess, refine, and modify the VIP program to ensure long-term success and sustainability. The purpose of the evaluation was “to assess the program at the national level, with samples or pilots of regional and local programs, in order to provide a system for program accountability, articulate best practices, and identify needs and directions for program improvements.” The assessment project began in the spring of 2005 and ended in December, 2006.



The consulting firm of Walker Davidson LLC worked with an evaluation team (referred to as the steering committee) consisting of various NPS staff including VIP Program Managers, park staff, regional VIP managers, regional staff, the servicewide VIP program coordinator, and park partners. Team members brought a variety of assets to the project, including knowledge and skills in program development, evaluation methods, instrument design, data analysis, volunteer management, and National Park Service organizational culture, policies, and procedures.

Working with the steering committee, assessment tools were developed to ascertain the effectiveness of the current volunteer program at a number of important levels including:

(1) LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM

- Time spent managing volunteer programs in relation to program and park size
- Effectiveness of volunteer program at all levels
- Time spent managing the VIP program and its effectiveness
- Leadership vision of volunteerism and overall support

¹ VIP Supplemental Study Phase 2

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

(2) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS WITHIN PARKS/REGIONS AND WASO

- Funding levels and sources and their effects on volunteer programs
- Stakeholder level of satisfaction including those of VIPs, park staff, partners, and visitors
- How management of volunteer programs has influenced stakeholders
- Knowledge level and experience in cultivating partnerships with volunteers and external organizations

(3) PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Adequacy of technical support from Regional and Washington offices including provisions for funding and supplies.
- Skills of park staff in volunteer mobilization, program development, and evaluation
- Usefulness of a servicerwide database, including systems in place for record keeping and data collection
- Effectiveness of the volunteer website (public and inside) in meeting NPS needs
- Policy and procedure documents for volunteers

(4) VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT: RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

- Staff and volunteer skill levels and abilities to accomplish tasks
- Amount and type of training for staff and volunteers
- Prime sources of volunteers including those hired through volunteer.gov.
- Screening, on-boarding of volunteers
- Encouragement of diversity in recruiting, including persons with disabilities, persons from low income backgrounds, and other underrepresented groups
- Risk Management

(5) MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

- Measurable goals and objectives in place, along with systems to monitor program
- Processes in place to allow for on-going evaluation of the volunteer and the program
- Monitoring of the monetary value of the volunteer contribution

(6) RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION

- Programs for recognizing the work volunteers perform
- Evaluation of formal celebrations as consistent and perceived as fairly administered by volunteers and staff
- Staff acknowledgment for their contribution to the volunteer program

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

LONGER TERM OUTCOMES

- Effectiveness of volunteer program management training on NPS staff and how it has affected the numbers and hours of volunteers
- Sustainability of partnerships and the retention of volunteers
- Average length of service of volunteers and their involvement in multiple park projects
- Whether underserved populations such as seniors, youth, and minorities have been recruited as a result of program efforts
- Attitudes towards the park and NPS as a result of VIP program efforts.

VIP PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODS

Initially the project was going to utilize the following methods of evaluation:

- A web-based survey for internal NPS staff
- A web-based survey for external volunteers
- Focus groups

However, due to budget constraints, the focus groups were eliminated, and our evaluation methods were limited to the surveys only. We increased the number of internal surveys from one to three (one for each major stakeholder group including line staff, general management and VIP coordinators/managers). We also augmented the one external survey with the option of completing a paper survey in order to satisfy OMB requirements.



We conducted standard statistical analyses including data cleaning and SPSS database preparation on all four NPS volunteer surveys. We compared survey response means with selected respondent groups (ANOVA tests) and performed chi-square tests for relationships among selected respondent groups.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

CONCLUSIONS

We reviewed more than 1500 pages of data from the four surveys (three internal and one for volunteers) for a total input base of more than 6700 survey participants (3120 internal NPS staff and 3611 external volunteers).

Overall, the NPS VIP program is one in which the organization is prepared to work with their volunteers in a manner that results in a mutually beneficial relationship—one in which the organization knows that something productive and necessary is being accomplished by volunteers and the individual volunteers believe that their talents and strengths are being utilized and appreciated. The conclusions that follow are organized by six key areas including:



- (1) Leadership/Program Management
- (2) Resource Management & Allocation
- (3) Planning and Infrastructure
- (4) Volunteer Engagement (Recruitment and Training)
- (5) Measurement and Evaluation
- (6) Recognition and Celebration

I. LEADERSHIP/PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- (1) It is clear that the organization and its leadership care about volunteerism. However, it isn't being articulated consistently throughout the NPS. In reviewing the three internal surveys, 53% do not believe that providing an outstanding volunteer experience is a management priority. Communicating a broad vision for volunteerism by the NPS leadership needs to ripple throughout the organization more effectively.
- (2) The NPS has done an adequate job of designating qualified staff to manage the VIP program at the national, regional and park level. Their responsibilities are clearly stated and they have dedicated time committed to the management and well being of volunteers within the organization. However, at many sites, dedicated VIP management resources diminish significantly, with the average VIP coordinator/manager in their role as 'collateral duty', spending on average one-fourth of their time managing the VIP program. In terms of program responsibility, the majority of VIP Managers/Coordinators have the authority to make decisions that impact the program at their site/area.
- (3) This VIP program assessment shows significant dedication to the VIP program and survey results highlight the fact that the organization has done a good job of conceptualizing the value of volunteer involvement and its desire to be responsive to changing trends in volunteerism. From the volunteer perspective (where the 'rubber meets the road,' so to speak) the vast majority believe that managers/leaders of VIP programs resolve issues that arise, keep them well informed and motivated, solicit their suggestions, and have realistic expectations of volunteers.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- (4) The VIP coordinator at the national level does not report directly to senior management and does not participate in appropriate organizational planning activities. At the regional and park level, 55% of VIP Managers/Coordinators are not recognized as part of the management team.
- (5) In terms of level of support, VIP Managers/Coordinators said they received the most support at the regional level (70%), followed by employees/staff support (67%), followed by support from their superintendent (57%), and WASO (49%). The support at all of these levels needs to be significantly higher. What that support needs to be needs further exploration.
- (6) Volunteers are not regularly encouraged to provide feedback (nor are line staff). Volunteers did say, however, that their VIP coordinator keeps them well informed in order to do their job (80%). Overall satisfaction with VIP program supervision efforts seems low, with 48% of line staff satisfied, 53% of general management, and 62% of VIP coordinators. Volunteers are the most satisfied, at 77% responding favorably.

II. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & ALLOCATION

- (1) In order to have a well-managed volunteer program that is aligned with the organization's strategic direction and needs, the budget must provide sufficient financial, technological and human resources to facilitate volunteer involvement.
 - a. According to the survey results, more commitment will be necessary to develop long range plans to grow the volunteer program and dedicate staff accordingly. 63% of VIP Managers/Coordinators target volunteer positions toward long-term engagement, 58% towards short term engagements and 58% have no plans to dedicate more staff as the volunteer program grows. Almost one-quarter of VIP programs do not keep a current list of volunteer opportunities nor do they have plans to actively recruit volunteers for specific program needs. Another one-quarter of general management responding to the survey do not know if the VIP program at their site/region has specific targets to meet in terms of volunteer hours.
 - b. About one-half of VIP coordinators said they do not have adequate resources to properly manage their VIP program, and another 40% do not believe program funds are allocated in a way that is fair.
 - c. The use of technology to market and communicate needs and successes of the program may be available; however, it is not widely utilized by internal NPS staff or volunteers. The majority of general management and staff responding to the survey do not utilize the NPS VIP website or the InsideNPS website. If these sites are a primary source of information about the VIP program, they are not being used internally to keep current about the program.
- (2) The majority of staff are aware of their responsibility to interact positively with volunteers, and more work can be done to ensure those working directly with volunteers have the training they require to engage volunteers in the work of the organization. About one-quarter of line staff does not think they have the training they need to supervise volunteers, and another 25% do not understand how their role in the VIP program supports the NPS VIP program goals.



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- (3) Communication and VIP program processes are fragmented within and across program areas, regions and parks, which results in lost productivity, re-work and turf battles. For internal VIP program staff, most interaction occurs within the respondents' own program/site area, and even then, only 54% interacted with others more than 10 times in the last 12 months. There is little or no cross pollination across regions or program areas for people engaged in VIP program activities. Only 34% of VIP Managers/Coordinators said they are aware of innovative VIP program management ideas coming from other sites/regions/organizations. About one-quarter of VIP Managers/Coordinators said they interact with other VIP program managers on a regular basis.
- (4) More than 50% of the VIP Managers/Coordinators spent less than 15% of their time performing VIP program management duties over the past year. Finding ways to prioritize and act on program improvements will be a challenge for a group of VIP managers who are predominately performing this job function as a collateral duty.
- (5) Out of a total of 362 sites with active volunteer programs that report volunteer statistics each year, 82 sites, or a little over one-quarter did not respond to the volunteer information collection request. The reasons for not responding were varied, if given at all.

III. PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE

- (1) The NPS strategic plan (GPRA—Government Performance Results Act) includes a long term goal to increase volunteer hours. Only 54% of VIP coordinators reported that they met their GPRA goal of volunteer hours in 2004. Another one-quarter of general management reported that they did not know if their site has specific targets to reach in terms of volunteer hours.

As planning trickles down throughout the organization, goal setting needs to occur at the regional and park level to target VIP program improvements that focus on recruitment and retaining volunteers. About 50% of VIP coordinators and general management said that these targets do not currently exist.

- (2) Policy and procedure documents for volunteers as well as job opportunities are not kept current at all park locations. An estimated 60% of survey respondents said they are provided with adequate information to do their job. Only 65% of VIP coordinators said they have current lists of opportunities for volunteers.
- (3) Electronic and communication print systems are valued by internal staff responding to the survey (70% would find such publications useful); however, these systems are not used to effectively facilitate staff and volunteer interaction. The VIP websites (NPS and InsideNPS) are not being used by VIP coordinators/managers and general management to keep updated about VIP program information. 70% of general management said they either do not know the web site exists or they never access it. 62% of VIP coordinators/managers said they have accessed the web site between 1-10 times over the past 12 months, with one-quarter of them only accessing the site 1-2 times during that period of time. And, only 10% of volunteers reporting using the internet to research volunteer opportunities at the NPS.



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

IV. VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT (RECRUITMENT & TRAINING)

- (1) The dedication of volunteers and others in the NPS to the VIP program is of the highest quality. The positive attitude of volunteers is exceptional.
- (2) On-going, targeted recruitment plans rolled out from the national level and aligned at the regional and site level are either not developed or not communicated sufficiently. About 50% of VIP coordinators reported not having targets for recruiting volunteers while another 25% of general management does not know if such targets exist. Also, there are significantly more opportunities available in all program areas than there are volunteers working. The majority of volunteers work in interpretation, maintenance, or natural resource management (64.5%) yet there are opportunities available in administration, cultural resource management, campground host, protection/law enforcement, and general management, where only 35.5% of volunteers responding to the survey said they work.
- (3) According to the survey results, volunteers are not consistently interviewed and screened. Additionally, each volunteer in a well-managed program would have a comprehensive position description that outlines performance expectations and a designated supervisor who gives regular feedback relative to his or her performance. On average, 25% of survey respondents do not have adequate job descriptions for volunteers (64% say they do), and the same amount of volunteers said they did not go through an interviewing process prior to being selected. Most park sites (60%) do not perform background checks prior to offering someone a volunteer position. Even though this is the case, 93% of volunteers believe they have the training they need to do their job.
- (4) The volunteer population, while extremely motivated and dedicated, is not a very diverse group. About one-half of the volunteer population is between 61-80 years old, are retired, male, have either some college/associate degree or a 4-year college degree (More than 60% have a 4-year college or higher degree), and have a specific, on-going volunteer job. Around 90% of this population is Caucasian, able-bodied, prefer English for speaking, and are satisfied with their volunteer experience.
- (5) New volunteers are not consistently oriented to the organization and its work, nor do they consistently receive on-going training for the duties they are asked to perform. About 70% of volunteers report receiving orientation training and another 60% said they received safety training as part of their on-boarding process.
- (6) The perceptions of line staff differ significantly from VIP Managers/Coordinators, general management, and volunteers regarding the adequacy of orientation and on-going training efforts. Both general management and line staff may not be aware of the training provided, or volunteers are not receiving the training they need. What is clear is volunteers believe they have the training they need to do their job. Given the highly educated demographics of the volunteers and the program areas in which they work (interpretation, maintenance and natural resources make up almost 65%) it is not surprising that they come into the NPS with significant training and work experience.
- (7) There is a significant difference in perception across job categories regarding whether volunteers understand the purpose of the project on which they work and how it supports the larger NPS mission. 55.1% of line staff either strongly agree or agree that they do, while 66.2% of general management and 82.3% of VIP



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Managers/Coordinators responded in that way. This question was also asked of volunteers, 86.5% responded that they understand how their volunteer job fits into the overall NPS mission.

- (8) NPS employees are an important source of recruitment: 25% of volunteers that responded reported that they discovered the VIP program through contact with a current employee. Approximately 18% found out about the VIP program from current volunteers and/or family and friends. Only 10% used the internet to research volunteer opportunities with the NPS.
- (9) The organization has done a satisfactory job at some park sites of planning and budgeting to support the development of qualified managers of volunteers and his or her ongoing professional development. This needs to be more consistent for all who have VIP program management responsibilities. About 50% of VIP Managers/Coordinators are perceived as having the training they need to manage their VIP program by general management. About one-quarter of VIP Managers/Coordinators said they do not have the training they need to manage their program, and another 20% do not know where to get the training they need to be more effective in their VIP Manager/Coordinator role.

V. MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

- (1) Measurable goals and objectives, coupled with systems to monitor and communicate progress throughout the NPS are an important part of the VIP program. Systems are in place for record keeping and data collection (95% of VIP coordinators keep volunteer statistics and update them) and the majority are satisfied with VIP program technology and reporting (70% of VIP coordinators and about 60% of general management). However, the reporting of VIP statistics is not happening consistently across the NPS with only 64% of VIP Managers prepared to report VIP statistics quarterly.
- (2) The monetary value of the volunteer contribution is monitored and reported in agency reports on a regular basis. What is unclear is if the value created by volunteers in terms of outcomes is evaluated and then contrasted against the actual costs of outcome generation.
- (3) This program assessment project is one way the NPS is doing an excellent job of monitoring the experience of volunteers (and internal staff) and providing a baseline for on-going program evaluation and improvement. The response rate for this assessment process was excellent. 28.5% of line staff, 41% of general management, 58% of VIP Managers/Coordinators and 40% of volunteers responded to the survey for a total of 6731 responses.
- (4) There is no data from this assessment project to know if exit interviewing takes place. The contact list for this survey came from volunteers who are actively involved in the program.



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VI. RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION

- (1) Volunteers are formally thanked for the work they perform towards achieving the mission of the organization. 85% of VIP coordinators reported having a recognition program for volunteers; however, only 71% of volunteers are aware of such a program, and even less line staff (63%).
- (2) The recognition of volunteers on an on-going basis for their assistance and dedication does not happen consistently throughout the NPS, based on the survey responses across all four surveys.
- (3) Staff is not consistently acknowledged for their contribution to the volunteer program. 60% of VIP coordinators said they did not have a plan to recognize employees who work with and support volunteers, and about 40% said their accomplishments are unrecognized.



RECOMMENDATIONS

I. LEADERSHIP/PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- (1) Continue to develop strategies for the organization and its leadership to articulate and broadly share a vision for volunteerism. This vision needs to be apparent in selected documents, such as the NPS mission statement, its strategic plan (GPRA goals), and its annual report. It needs to address why the NPS encourages, promotes, and supports volunteerism.
- (2) Effective management of the program needs to be part of the performance evaluation process for all VIP and general management personnel to raise the level of awareness and active support of the program. Leadership needs to provide direction in terms of goals and objectives, align with existing community relations and involvement strategies, and incorporate service-wide objectives, employee interests, and community needs. Encourage a high level of senior management buy-in and support for volunteerism, as well as participation in community and board service activities. Management at all levels needs to legitimize the value of the program, secure necessary resources and personnel, and motivate employees/others to volunteer.
- (3) The Service-wide VIP program coordinator should report to senior management and participate in appropriate organizational planning activities.
- (4) NPS leadership needs to take a systemic look at cultural norms within the organization that interfere with full participation in service-wide initiatives like this assessment project. 82 sites were allowed to not participate in this assessment project.
- (5) The VIP Advisory Council needs to meet periodically (face-to-face) to share best practices, identify trends in the field, and work together in developing strategic plans that incorporate the strategic direction provided by the NPS leadership (National Leadership Council). The Advisory Council should also work together in prioritizing next steps based on this program assessment report of findings and develop plans for program improvement implementation.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

II. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & ALLOCATION

- (1) Perform a core operations analysis of the current work load of all VIP Managers/Coordinators to determine if there is sufficient staff dedicated to managing VIP programs at the national, regional, and park site levels. A compensation study also needs to be performed to determine how to fairly compensate staff 'across-the-board' for their VIP managing/coordinating responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the NPS leadership to ensure that an appropriate number of personnel and a sufficient amount of funds are provided to effectively support, manage, and run the program.
- (2) Best practices need to be researched at the program, regional, and park level in the areas of recruitment, training, funding, and general program effectiveness. Identify ways to bring people together to share and learn from each other in order to implement on-going program improvements.

III. PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE

- (1) The NPS Service-wide VIP program manager and the VIP Advisory Council need to develop a plan to review the policies and procedures guiding the VIP program to determine if they are realistic and able to be followed and enforced, specifically in terms of training, recruitment, program management, safety, and performing background checks on potential volunteers.
- (3) Develop an outcome-based evaluation method to evaluate the program in order to assess how effectively the program has achieved its intended results. Outcome-based evaluation seeks to determine the change or impact that a program makes in the lives and participants and tells why that is important. It would focus on questions such as: (1) How has the VIP program made a difference (not just in terms of hours of time donated), and (2) How are the lives of program participants better as a result of the VIP program? This type of evaluation has important internal uses including:
 - Provide direction for staff
 - Identify training needs and program improvement strategies
 - Provide input for annual and strategic planning
 - Guide planning and justify resource allocation
 - Identify targets
 - Focus attention on programmatic issues



And, outcome-based program evaluation has important external uses which include:

- Recruit talented staff and volunteers
- Promote the program to potential participants and referral sources
- Identify partners for collaboration
- Enhance the program's public image
- Retain and increase funding

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

IV. VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT (RECRUITMENT & TRAINING)

- (1) The NPS could benefit from identifying (1) where the best practices are in terms of recruitment in/out of the NPS, and, (2) leveraging those best practices to recruit a volunteer pool reflecting all aspects of diversity. Recruitment should intentionally encourage diversity, including persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups. If one does not exist, a budget needs to be developed and devoted for recruitment purposes.
- (2) Continue to actively educate both employees and management alike on the importance of volunteering, why the NPS encourages and supports volunteerism, related guidelines, policies and programs, and the benefits they, their communities, and the organization enjoy.
- (3) Create a culture that motivates employees (at all levels) to want to get involved in the VIP program by incorporating their needs and interests. Make it easy and rewarding for employees to get involved. Provide them with a variety of events and activities to participate in, and solicit employee feedback.
- (4) Investigate to understand why the majority of line staff does not believe volunteers are receiving orientation training immediately on assignment. Research orientation training at large versus small programs. Why does orientation training not seem to be occurring in a timely manner at some large program sites? Understand who is doing orientation training well and what can be learned from them.
- (5) Understand why line staff and general management (to a lesser degree) have a distinctly different perception from VIPs and volunteers when it comes to the extent to which volunteers connect what they do to the mission of the NPS. What are these groups observing that leads them to believe that volunteers do not understand how their work connects to the larger NPS mission?
- (6) The reason for the different perspectives across job categories relative to the level of training volunteers have or do not have should be explored further. One conclusion may be that line staff are closer to the actual work of volunteers and see that safety procedures need to be more consistently enforced. If this is true, then training and enforcement efforts should be increased.



V. MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

- (1) Develop policy and procedures to conduct a survey/evaluation of volunteers about their experiences as they exit the program. Use this information to continually improve program effectiveness.
- (2) Track employee engagement in the VIP program so exact time commitments and other information are known.
- (3) Develop ways to solicit feedback from employees, management, volunteers, and partners on a regular basis.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VI. RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION

- (1) Identify where recognition programs are working well and find ways to communicate and support all sites to institute recognition programs that are valued by volunteers and administered fairly.
- (2) Develop ways to recognize employees (at all levels) for their commitment of time, talent, and energy (both formally and informally) to the VIP program on a regular basis.
- (3) Develop a communication strategy and leverage appropriate communications tools to deliver pertinent information and messages to key internal and external audiences aimed at generating awareness, elevating interest, and driving participation.



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS/INTERNAL SURVEY

- (1) There is little or no cross pollination across regions or program areas for people engaged in VIP program activities. Most interaction occurs within the respondents own program/site area, and even then, only 54% interacted with others more than 10 times in the last 12 months.
- (2) 66.3% are either very satisfied or satisfied in terms of overall satisfaction with the VIP services provided within each respondent's program area.
- (3) 54.8% are either satisfied or very satisfied with how well informed people involved with the VIP program are regarding program policy and general volunteer management.
- (4) 65.4% reported that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with how VIP program support requests are handled.
- (5) 77.2% said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the responsiveness of program area staff.
- (6) When asked how well program area staff provides adequate information to do their job, 62.8% reported being either satisfied or very satisfied.
- (7) 65% are either satisfied or very satisfied when asked how well the use of volunteers is promoted in [all] programs/divisions.
- (8) 56.1% spent less than 15% of their time performing VIP Manager/Coordinator duties over the past 12 months.
- (9) 83.7% of those in VIP Manager/Coordinator positions spend no more than 25% of their time performing those duties.
- (10) About ½ of those who responded to the survey said they think recruitment efforts meet the needs of the program.

Recruitment

- (11) Overall satisfaction with VIP program recruitment is low, at 47%.
- (12) Slightly more than ¼ believe that increased numbers of volunteers threaten the jobs of NPS staff, with the highest% among VIP Managers/Coordinators (8-9% higher than line staff and general management).
- (13) Line staff had the lowest SA/A (Strongly Agree/Agree)% rate when asked if staff participates in selecting volunteers, while VIP Managers/Coordinators had the highest SA/A% rate.
- (14) 50% or more of general management and VIP Managers do not think recruitment efforts meet VIP program needs.
- (15) There seems to be a general lack of awareness about the VIP program beyond VIP management. Examples:
 - About ¼ of general management said they do not know if their recruitment goals are realistic, while almost 40% said they thought the recruitment goals are realistic.
 - Almost ½ of VIP Managers/Coordinators said they do not have targets for retaining volunteers, while slightly more than ¼ of general management do not know.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- 32.7% of general management agrees that they have specific targets to reach in terms of volunteer hours, while 25.3% do not know.

(16) Interpretation, maintenance, and cultural resource management rank highest in terms of program areas offering volunteer opportunities. The external survey response rate shows that 50.2% of volunteers work in either interpretation or maintenance, but only 9.4% said they volunteer in cultural resource management.

(17) Interviewing/screening is not happening consistently prior to volunteers being selected.

(18) About 64% said that their volunteers are regularly challenged to try new things. A corresponding question was asked to volunteers, "My volunteer manager...knows how to motivate and lead volunteers." 74.7% of volunteers believe their volunteer manager does well in terms of motivating and leading them.

Volunteer Newsletter

(19) The majority of respondents would find a servicewide volunteer newsletter informative and would prefer to receive it electronically.

Training

(20) 68.3% of VIP Managers/Coordinators and 62.4% of volunteers believe "new volunteers receive safety training immediately upon assignment," compared to only 36.5% of line staff and 55.9% of general management. Looking across program size, there is a perception that training occurs less consistently at larger programs.

(21) The next statement, "Volunteers receive on-going training appropriate to their job(s)" also indicates a discrepancy in response by job classification, with VIP Managers/Coordinators (81.9%) agreeing with this statement, compared with 64.3% of general management and 51.8% of line staff. Are general management and line staff not aware of on-going training, or are volunteers not receiving the training they need?

(22) In comparing this data to the question asked of volunteers, "I have the training I need to perform my volunteer job," an impressive 93.5% believe they do. The opportunity/potential next step is to dig deeper to understand why line staff (in particular) have a significantly different perspective. Why do those having face-to-face contact with volunteers think volunteers do not have the training they need? What additional training needs to be offered?

(23) "Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP program training efforts in my area at this time" has higher response rates across all job categories in the strongly agree/agree and neither categories. There is a statistical difference in job categories for the strongly disagree/disagree response rate, with VIP Managers/Coordinators being the most dissatisfied (27.8%). There was no statistical variation by region or program size. Volunteers are the most satisfied (78.4%) with VIP training efforts.

(24) The majority of line staff/general management believes they have the necessary training to supervise volunteers and to handle difficult situations as they arise (average of 78.8%).

(25) A lesser percentage of VIPs think they have the training they need to handle difficult situations as they arise (63% compared to an average of 85% for line staff and general management).

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- (26) An average of 87% of line staff and general management understand how their role in the VIP program supports the NPS VIP program.
- (27) Only about one-half of VIPs educate employees about volunteerism and its benefits.
- (28) 23.5% of VIPs do not believe they have the training they need to manage their volunteer program and another 20% do not know where to get the training they need to be more effective in their VIP role.
- (29) 50% of VIPs do not provide volunteer management training to others.
- (30) 66.3% said their supervisor is supportive of VIPs getting the training they need.

Feedback, Recognition & Supervision

- (31) Only 34% of VIPs are aware of innovative VIP program management ideas coming from other sites, regions, or organizations.
- (32) About ¼ of VIPs interact with other VIP program managers on a regular basis.
- (33) 70% said their supervisor is equally concerned with the quality and quantity of their work and involves them in decisions affecting their VIP program.
- (34) 74% said their supervisor is accessible when they need assistance.
- (35) Only 44% believe they are recognized for the work they do with the VIP program, and another 43% said their supervisor inspires them to do their best work every day, relative to the VIP program.
- (36) 40% receive coaching support in achieving their objectives.
- (37) 58% said their supervisor is proactive in creating a positive work environment for volunteers, while 60% of VIPs said their supervisor encourages them to come up with new and better ways to do things.
- (38) 69% of VIP programs utilize partnership agreements with other organizations to assist in their program.
- (39) 62% of VIPs said they get the staff support need to manage their VIP program, while almost 28% said they do not.
- (40) The next series of three questions were asked specifically to line staff regarding their perceptions about direction and feedback pertaining to volunteers and the overall program.
 - 44% said volunteers are given the necessary attention and direction throughout their assignments.
 - 40% said volunteers regularly receive feedback about their work.
 - 28% said they are regularly encouraged to provide VIP program feedback.

Safety

- (41) There were significant differences between groups when asked if volunteers understand NPS safety procedures. 83.4% of volunteers believe they understand procedures, compared to only 42% of line staff.
 - When asked if NPS safety procedures are followed, only 47% of line staff agreed compared to 79% of VIPs.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- 38% of line staff believe that relative to the VIP program, emergency procedures are defined, compared to 61% of VIPs.
- Overall satisfaction with VIP program safety efforts also show a significant difference, with only 44% of line staff satisfied, compared to 62% of VIPs.

(42) 93% of VIPs say they track and report volunteer injuries, compared to 78% of general management. A much lesser percentage performs job safety analyses for volunteer positions (about 40%).

Funding Sources & FTE Allocation

(43) The majority of VIP programs (60.7% average) rely on other NPS allocated funds in addition to VIP funds to support the volunteer program.

(44) The response of VIP Managers/Coordinators when asked, *"How many total volunteer hours were worked in your site/area?"* was between 2501—10,000 hours.

(45) In looking at the overall response, both groups agree that the ideal FTE to support the VIP program would be between 15,000-25,000 volunteer hours. The mean = slightly more than 25,000 volunteer hours per FTE management support.

(46) When considering the responses for the last two questions, respondents believe that the best way to manage the VIP program is to have dedicated staff for every 25,000 hours of volunteering and the current level of dedicated staff is about ¼ FTE. The opportunity exists to research where FTE support is insufficient based on these responses. Although the responses are consistent by region and program size, the program size histogram provides an interesting visual to identify where the variations are.

(47) Length of time working in the position (as collateral duty or full-time):

- 38.3% of VIP Managers/Coordinators have been working in that capacity between 1-4 years (98 total respondents).
- 34% have been working in as VIP Managers/Coordinators between 5-10 years (87 total respondents)
- 12.5% have been working in as VIP Managers/Coordinators between 11-15 years (32 total respondents)

(48) 60.3% are of the opinion that there is not an adequate number of FTEs dedicated to managing a site/etc.

(49) About 56% said there are no management plans to dedicate more staff to volunteer program management as the program grows.

(50) 50.8% of VIPs are responsible for allocated VIP funds between \$1001-\$5000. Almost 20% have VIP program budgetary responsibility between \$5001-\$10,000.

(51) About 83% manage the VIP funds at their site.

(52) About 50% said that their VIP program's performance determines the amount of VIP funds their site/area/program receives. Another 22.4% do not know.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

(53) The next set of funding-related questions deals with understanding the level of responsibility and authority VIPs have in regard to VIP program funding issues.

- 90.5% have decision making authority to spend allocated VIP program funds.
- 81.5% believe they have the knowledge required to accurately track VIP funds for their site/area's program.
- 81% said they understand the policies/procedures regarding the allocation of VIP program funds.
- 56.3% actively pursue supplemental funds to manage their VIP program, while another, almost 30%, do not.
- 43.6% said they do not have adequate financial resources to properly manage their VIP program, while another 35.5% said they do.
- About 40% believe VIP program funds are allocated in a way that is fair, while another ¼ responded "neither agree nor disagree" and 23% said they do not believe funds are distributed fairly.
- 73% have the authority to make VIP program management decisions.
- 82% understand how their role in the VIP program supports the NPS VIP program goals.

Volunteer & Staff Relations

(54) About 60% have a plan to recognize staff working with volunteers, while 16.5% do not and another 21% said they "neither agree nor disagree."

(55) About 40% of VIPs believe their accomplishments are recognized when they do a good job, however, 35% disagree and 26% "neither agree nor disagree."

(56) The vast majority of employees (80% average across three internal surveys) believe that all NPS employees accept and appreciate the work of volunteers.

(57) 41% of line staff (compared to 55% of VIPs and 62% of general management) believes that providing an outstanding volunteer experience IS a management priority, while an average (across all three surveys) of 53% does not think it is a priority.

(58) An average of 65.7% (across three internal surveys) perceives NPS employees do have a positive mindset when interacting with volunteers.

(59) 32% of VIPs do not think there are clear conflict resolution tools in place, while 20% of line staff and 28.4% of general management staff believe are is.

(60) 92% of volunteers said they are treated with respect by NPS employees, while 75.2% of line staff agrees.

(61) On average, 75% of employees are satisfied with VIP program volunteer and staff relations at the present time.

(62) About 80% of general management and VIPs believe that volunteers and staff have good working relationships and respect each other, and believe that management supports and appreciates the work of volunteers.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- (63) An average of 38% of VIPs and general management said they are hearing more positive comments about the VIP program than they were hearing two years ago, while an average of 39% said they "neither agree nor disagree."
- (64) About 62% of VIPs said they get the staff support needed to manage the VIP program, while slightly more than ¼ said they do not.

EXTERNAL VOLUNTEER SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

- (1) VIPs are an extremely positive and motivated group. Overall volunteer experience ratings are very favorable.
- (2) The Northeast Region has the most number of respondents (22%), followed by the Intermountain region with 17%.
- (3) The majority of respondents work in the area of interpretation (27.3%), followed by maintenance (22.9%).
- (4) 45.8% of volunteers are between 61-80 years old, followed by 36.8% between the ages of 41-60.
- (5) 48.2% of volunteers are retired. 26.9% have full-time jobs.
- (6) 94.8% of volunteers have no disability/impairment that requires accommodation.
- (7) Slightly more men (56.5%) than women (43.5% volunteer).
- (8) 98.4% are not Hispanic or Latino.
- (9) 95.4% of those who volunteer are white/Caucasian.
- (10) 99.3% prefer English for speaking.
- (11) 11.5% can also speak Spanish.
- (12) 86.1% of those who volunteer have a degree beyond high school. 29.5% of volunteers hold masters, doctoral, or professional degrees, followed by 46.2% that have some college/associate degree, or a four year college degree.
- (13) 23.7% of volunteers have an income between \$40,000-\$59,999.
- (14) Primary motivations of why people volunteer include 36.7% having interest in a particular program.
- (15) 49.9% of volunteers have a specific on-going job.
- (16) 25% have been volunteering for 1-3 years. 20.5% have been volunteering between 5-10 years.
- (17) 20.2% average 101-300 hours of service per year. 19.2% average 51-100 hours per year.
- (18) 25.1% heard about their volunteer job through a current NPS employee.
- (19) 80.4% either strongly agree or agree that they are satisfied with the training they receive.
- (20) 63.2% strongly agree or agree that they are satisfied with recruitment activities.
- (21) 78.2% are satisfied with the leadership, management and support they receive as a volunteer.
- (22) 79.5% of those supervising volunteers are paid staff.
- (23) 75.1% say their VIP manager/coordinator is NPS paid staff.
- (24) 90.9% are with very satisfied or satisfied with their volunteer experience.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

SUMMARY OF INTERNAL SURVEYS & EXTERNAL SURVEY "CROSS-WALK" QUESTIONS

In consultation with the steering committee, we decided to break out the internal survey into three separate surveys due to the diversity of stakeholder groups. Web-based surveys were designed for (1) line staff, (2) general management, and (3) VIP Managers/Coordinators. The purpose of each survey was to understand the NPS employee perspective about what is working well with the VIP program and what opportunities exist for improvement.



On August 30, 2005, invitations to participate in the internal NPS employee survey were sent out by email to a random sample of 13,000 employees pulled from the employee list of general management, VIP Managers/Coordinators and line staff work categories.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the information collected, the online surveys were located on an independent site separate from the NPS network, managed by Walker Davidson LLC. The collected data is shared in an aggregate format that does not identify information about an individual respondent, park or program location. Comments provided in each survey were edited for spelling and grammar, leaving the verbatim wording intact. (Comments from each survey are included as a separate document.).

Response to the three internal surveys by region:

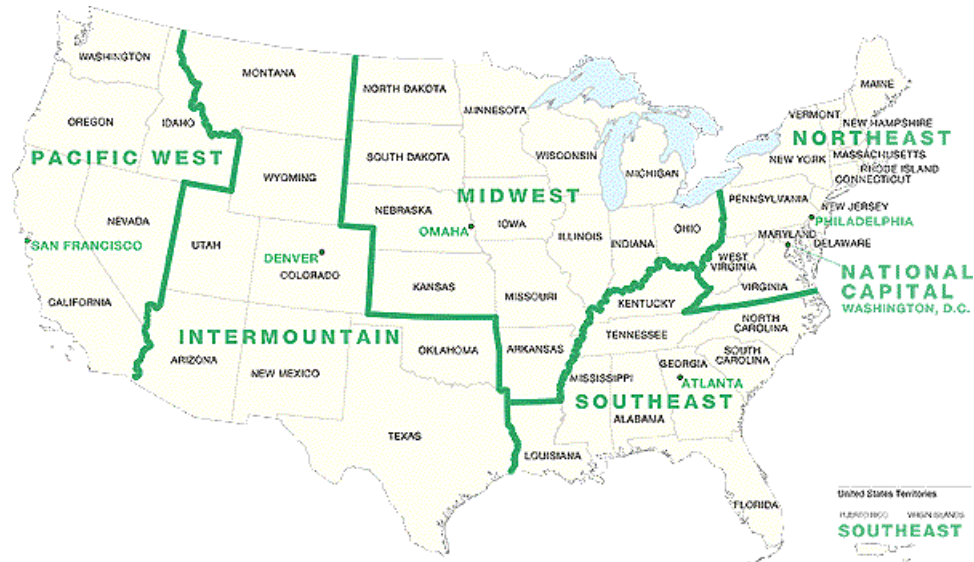
As shown below, the response by region across the three job categories was greatest in (1) Intermountain, (2) Northeast, (3) Southeast and, (4) Midwest.

Region	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Respondents
Alaska	159	5.1%
Intermountain	626	20.2%
Midwest	493	15.9%
National Capital	222	7.2%
Northeast	495	16.0%
Pacific West	426	13.8%
Southeast	466	15.0%
WASO	211	6.8%
Total	3098 ²	100.00%

² Number of participants who completed the survey

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Map Showing Regional Areas:



Response to the external survey by region:

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Alaska	70	2.0%
	2 Intermountain	612	17.2%
	3 Midwest	528	14.8%
	4 National Capital	328	9.2%
	5 Northeast	785	22.0%
	6 Pacific West	572	16.0%
	7 Southeast	576	16.1%
	8 WASO	82	2.3%
	99 Do Not Know	15	.4%
	Total	3568	100.0%
Missing	System	43	
Total		3611	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Response to the three internal surveys by program size:

Definitions

1. Small Program (the volunteer equivalent of 5 FTEs) at a site
2. Large Program (the volunteer equivalent of more than 5 FTEs) at a site

PROGRAM SIZE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Small Programs	1035	33.2%
Large Programs	2063	66.1%
Totals	(3098)	(99.3%) ³

Response to the three internal surveys by job category:

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
VIP Managers/Coordinators⁴ <i>440 were selected to participate (the complete contact list) = 58% response rate</i>	257	8.2%	8.2%
General Management <i>3151 were invited to participate (the complete contact list)= 41% response rate</i>	1304	41.8%	50.0%
Line Staff <i>5,463 were randomly selected to participate, from a contact list of 10,048) = 28.5% response rate.</i>	1559	50.0%	100.0%
Total	3120⁵	100.0%	

³ Does not take into account respondents that did not complete the survey

⁴ VIP Managers/Coordinators will be referred to simply as VIP managers in this report.

⁵ Number of people who started the survey, but may not have completed it.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Response to the external survey by volunteer job category/program area:

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Administration	159	4.6%
	2 Campground Host	369	10.8%
	3 Cultural Resources	324	9.4%
	4 General Management	105	3.1%
	5 Interpretation	936	27.3%
	6 Maintenance	785	22.9%
	7 Natural Resources	492	14.3%
	8 Protection/Law Enforcement	261	7.6%
	Total	3431	100.0%
Missing	System	180	
Total		3611	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The Initial Nine Questions

For each of the three internal surveys, we provided the same initial nine questions in order to gather overall VIP program data from each job category. Each internal survey started with:

(1) Thinking about the VIP program in general, how often in the last 12 months have you interacted with each of the sites/area/program?

(2) Which VIP program area did you interact with the most over the past 12 months?



There was not a significant difference in how any of the job categories responded. Most interaction occurs within the respondent's own program/site area, and even then, only 54% interacted with others more than 10 times in the last 12 months. There is little or no cross pollination across regions or program areas for people engaged in VIP program activities. See below:

How often have you interacted with other Sites/Areas/Programs?

Response rate for "Never"

REGION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Alaska	1875	88.8%
Intermountain	1579	70.6%
Midwest	1712	78.7%
National Capital	1717	80.8%
Northeast	1684	78.4%
Pacific West	1701	78.0%
Southeast	1663	76.8%
WASO	1535	71.7%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

How often have you interacted: My Site/Area/Program?

INTERACT WITH MY SITE/AREA/PROGRAM		FREQUENCY	PERCENT
	Never	414	15.7%
	1 Time	110	4.2%
	2-3 Times	284	10.8%
	4-5 Times	223	8.5%
	6-10 Times	180	6.8%
	Over 10 Times	1426	54.0%
	Total	2637	100.0%
Missing	System	483	
Total		3120	

Clearly, VIP programs would benefit from sharing “best practices” across regions, programs and sites. We need to identify ways that this “sharing” can occur efficiently and effectively.

VIP SERVICES, PROGRAM POLICY UNDERSTANDING, INFORMATION & USE OF VOLUNTEERS

The next six questions in the three internal surveys pertained to provision of VIP services, understanding of program policy, availability of information/communication, and strategic use of volunteers. The data combining the three job categories is summarized below. There was no significant difference across job category, region or program size.

For the purpose of the summary report, please note that the response categories of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree” have been combined, and “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree” have been combined in this report.

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
1. Thinking about the VIP program area you selected above, overall how satisfied are you with the services provided by the program area you selected?	66.3%	28.0%	5.7%
2. Overall, the people involved in the VIP program are well-informed with regard to VIP program policy and general volunteer management.	76.5%	16.7%	6.8%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Question	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
3. This program area staff does <i>not</i> handle VIP program support requests to my satisfaction.	12.1%	22.5%	65.4%
4. This program area staff is helpful and responsive.	77.2%	18.2%	4.6%
5. This program area staff promotes the use of volunteers in all programs/divisions.	65.5%	20.4%	14.1%
6. This program area staff provides me with adequate information to do my job.	62.8%	28.9%	8.3%

- 66.3% are either very satisfied or satisfied in terms of overall satisfaction with the VIP services provided within each respondent's program area.
- 76.5% are either satisfied or very satisfied with how well informed people involved with the VIP program are regarding program policy and general volunteer management.
- 65.4% reported that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with how VIP program support requests are handled.
- **77.2% said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the responsiveness of program area staff.**
- 65% are either satisfied or very satisfied when asked how well the use of volunteers is promoted in [all] programs/divisions.
- When asked how well program area staff provides adequate information to do their job, 62.8% reported being either satisfied or very satisfied.

About 69 percent, on average, of respondents in all three job categories were satisfied or very satisfied, with one exception. More than 77 percent of all employees participating in the survey thought program area staff was responsive. The 'neither agree nor disagree' response for all job categories was between 15%-24.5%, depending on the question asked.

Examining this data, it's logical to ask:

- What would we like these percentages to be 1-2 years from today?
- Are we satisfied with these percentages?

We need to determine measures for improvement in the following areas:

- Additional VIP program services provided
- Training for employees to improve overall knowledge of VIP program, services, and management

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- Better utilization of volunteers
- Better responsiveness from program area staff when concerns/issues/questions are brought forward to them.

Question #9 in the line staff and general management surveys asked, "Do you supervise volunteers as part of your job?" The breakout of responses is below:

- Of the 1,657 general management staff who answered the question, **44.2% (733) responded "yes,"** while 55.8% (924) responded "no."
- Of the 1,715 line staff who answered the question, **34.2% (587) responded "yes,"** while 65.8% responded "no."

The next question asked staff members in each job category how much of their time over the past 12 months had been spent performing VIP Manager/Coordinator duties. 1,301 people responded to this question. The remaining 1819 did not respond. We will assume they did not perform any VIP Manager/Coordinator duties.

Mean response = 56.1%. This group spent less than 15% of their time performing VIP Manager/Coordinator duties over the past 12 months.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Less than 15%	730	56.1%
	16% to 25%	359	27.6%
	26% to 50%	146	11.2%
	51% to 75%	35	2.8%
	76% to 99%	24	1.8%
	100%	7	.5%
	Total	1301	100.0%
Missing	System	1819	
Total		3120	

83.7% of those in VIP Manager/Coordinator positions spend no more than 25% of their time performing those duties.

What work could be accomplished with more time available to perform VIP Manager duties? Potential next steps would be to:

- (1) Develop a complete list of all of the work VIP Managers are responsible for,
- (2) Have VIP Managers identify the tasks they are able to do and those they are not able to do because of the lack of time, training or other reasons, and
- (3) Identify the additional FTEs that would be required to complete the tasks now left undone.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

RECRUITMENT

The next series of questions asked Line Staff, general management and VIP Managers/Coordinators their perceptions about volunteer recruitment activities.

Below is the breakout by job category in terms of responses to each survey question followed by a brief summary of key findings. Percentages in **bold** indicate a statistically significant difference in the response when compared across job categories.



Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neither = N Strongly Disagree = SD Disagree = D Do not Know = DK	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Manager Coordinator	External Survey Volunteers
1. Recruitment efforts do not meet all program needs	33.6% SA/A 19.8% SD/D 24.7% N 21.9% DK	50.8% SA/A 14.3% SD/D 18.8% N 16.1% DK	55.1% SA/A 34.1% SD/D 19.3% N 1.5% DK	
2. Increased numbers of volunteers threaten the jobs of NPS staff⁷ (External Volunteer Question #41)	22.7% SA/A 48.3% SD/D 16.8% N 12.2% DK	21.3% SA/A 57.4% SD/D 14% N 7.3% DK	30.2% SA/A 51.8% SD/D 15.3% N 2.7% DK	8.4% SA/A⁸ 58.3% SD/D 8.3% somewhat... ⁹ 25% DK
3. Staff participates in selecting volunteers	28.9% SA/A 29.8% SD/D 20.8% N 20.5% DK	55.9% SA/A 19.7% SD/D 12.4% N 12.0%DK	63.6% SA/A 21.2% SD/D 14.9% N 0.3% DK	
4. Our VIP program reflects the ethnic diversity of the community that surrounds our site/area	33.9% SA/A 26.2% SD/D 23.8% N 16.1% DK	38.8% SA/A 30.1% SD/D 18.9% N 12.2%DK	38.8% SA/A 39.6% SD/D 20.4% N 1.2% DK	
5. I do not recommend my site as a place to volunteer	6.4% SA/A 73.6% SD/D	5.1% SA/A 79.3% SD/D	3.1% SA/A 89.8% SD/D	

⁶ For the purposes of this summary report, percentages have been combined for the responses "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" and for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree"

⁷ Questions highlighted in **yellow** were asked to Volunteers as well.

⁸ External survey question: "Park staff are concerned that their jobs will be lost to volunteers."

⁹ Rating scale on external survey differed: Rather than "Neither agree/disagree" the rate was "Somewhat agree and Somewhat disagree." Change was based on feedback from OMB after internal surveys were completed.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Key ⁶ : Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neither = N Strongly Disagree = SD Disagree = D Do not Know = DK	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Manager Coordinator	External Survey Volunteers
	11.5% N 8.5% DK	9.2% N 6.4% DK	5.5% N 1.6% DK	
6. I recommend the NPS as a place to volunteer. (External Volunteer Question #53)	83.4% SA/A 3.2% SD/D 7% N 6.4% DK	90.6% SA/A 10.6% SD/D 4.5% N 3.3% DK	96.5% SA/A .8% SD/D 2.7% N 0.0% DK	90.5% SA/A ¹⁰ 1.5% SD/D 7.0% Somewhat... 1.0% DK
7. Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP program recruitment in my area at the present time. (External Volunteer Question #29)	45.5% SA/A 17% SD/D 37.6% N 0.4% DK	48.6% SA/A 22.3% SD/D 29.1% N 0.0% DK	52.9% SA/A 24.8% SD/D 22.3% N 0.0% DK	80.4% SA/A 8.8% SD/D 8.2% Somewhat... 2.6% DK
8. We have a plan to actively recruit volunteers for specific program needs		48.0% SA/A 22.2% SD/D 16.4% N 13.4% DK	62.9% SA/A 25.1% SD/D 12.0% N 0.0% DK	
9. We do <u>not</u> maintain a current list of volunteer opportunities		23.0% SA/A 48.2% SD/D 12.4% N 16.4% DK	22.9% SA/A 65.0% SD/D 11.4% N .7% DK	
10. We have a plan to devote more staff to the volunteer program as it grows		13.7% SA/A 45.2% SD/D 21.5% N 19.6% DK	62.9% SA/A 25.1% SD/D 22.0% N 0.0% DK	
11. Our volunteer recruitment goals are <u>not</u> realistic		10.5% SA/A 39.0% SD/D 29.7% N 20.8% DK		
12. We do <u>not</u> have targets for retaining volunteers		32.0% SA/A 17.9% SD/D 23.5% N 26.6% DK	46.6% SA/A 26.0%SD/D 24.4%N 3% DK	
13. The objectives that have		60.5% SA/A	79.4% SA/A	

¹⁰ External survey question asked volunteers, "I would encourage friends, family, colleagues, etc. to volunteer."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Key: Strongly Agree = SA Agree = A Neither = N Strongly Disagree = SD Disagree = D Do not Know = DK	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Manager Coordinator	External Survey Volunteers
been set for our VIPs are reasonable.		4.5% SD/D 18.0% N 17.0% DK	4.4% SD/D 13.4% N 2.8% DK	
14. We have specific targets to reach in terms of volunteer hours.		32.7% SA/A 18.7% SD/D 23.4% N 25.2% DK		

- Fewer line staff agree that recruitment efforts meet the needs of the VIP program (33.6% SA/A compared to 50.8% of general management and 55.1% of VIP managers).
- VIP Managers have the highest% of agreement (average 30.2%) when asked if increased numbers of volunteers threaten the jobs of NPS staff. 25% of the external volunteers responded "Do not know."
- Line staff had the lowest SA/A% rate (28.9%) when asked if staff participates in selecting volunteers, while VIP Managers had the highest SA/A% rate (63.6%).
- Overall satisfaction with VIP program recruitment across the internal surveys averaged 47.0% either strongly agree/agree. External volunteers' level of overall satisfaction was significantly higher, at 80.4%.
- Across all three internal surveys, responses were statistically similar when asked about:
 - The ethnic diversity as a reflection of the community (41.6% SA/A). It is important to note that when compared to the volunteer survey—95.4% of volunteers are Caucasian.
 - Recommending their site as a place to volunteer (SA/A =83.6%)
 - Recommending NPS as a place to volunteer (SA/A = 90.4%)—asked to volunteers as well.

The next set of questions (8-14) regarding recruitment were asked of general management and VIP Managers only.

- 46.6% of VIP managers said they do not have targets for recruiting volunteers. 26.5% of general management does not know if there are recruitment targets for volunteers.
- 48.2% of general management and 65% of VIP managers said they keep a current list of volunteer opportunities.
- About 63% of VIP managers said they have a plan to devote more staff to the volunteer program as it grows, while 45.2% of general management said they have no plans to do so.
- About 25% of general management said they do not know if their recruitment goals were realistic, compared to the almost 40% said they thought the recruitment goals were realistic.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- Almost half of VIP managers responding said they do not have targets for retaining volunteers, while slightly more than one quarter of general management do not know if they have targets.
- General management and VIP managers responded differently when asked if they believed that the objectives set for VIPs are reasonable (60.5% versus 79.5%). We would need to follow up in order to have a better understanding of the significance and meaning of these differences.
- 32.7% of general management agrees that they have specific targets to reach in terms of volunteer hours, while 25.3% do not know.

Additional questions to explore:

- What is the ethnic diversity of rural versus urban park units?
- What is the ethnic diversity of visitors to rural versus urban park units?
- Why is internal staff satisfied with the diversity in their park areas when 95.4% of volunteers are Caucasian? What does this mean?

When we compare the responses regarding diversity and the actual lack of diversity in park volunteers a disconnect is clear. Establishing specific goals regarding ethnic diversity in volunteers (including community outreach efforts) could improve the situation.

Based on the data, NPS may also want to consider involving line staff more directly in recruitment of volunteers.

Overall satisfaction of VIP program recruitment is low, with 47% responding either strongly agree/agree. NPS could benefit from identifying:

- (1) Where the best practices are in terms of recruitment in/out of the NPS, and,
- (2) Leveraging those best practices to recruit a volunteer pool reflecting all aspects of diversity.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP Managers/Coordinators Perspective

VIP Managers were asked to identify the opportunities available by program area. The results of their responses are captured below:

We offer volunteer opportunities in the following program areas (check all that apply):

VIP Response			Volunteer Response ¹¹	
Response	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Interpretation	239	78.4%	936	27.3%
Maintenance	206	67.5%	785	22.9%
Cultural Resource Management	203	66.6%	324	9.4%
Administration	152	49.8%	159	4.6%
Natural Resource Management	184	60.3%	492	14.3%
Campground Host	76	24.9%	369	10.8%
Protection/Law Enforcement	72	23.6%	261	7.6%
General Management	65	21.3%	105	3.1%

Interpretation, maintenance and cultural resource management rank highest in terms of program areas offering volunteer opportunities. The external survey response rate shows that 50.2% of volunteers work in either interpretation or maintenance, but only 9.4% said they volunteer in cultural resource management.

There are significantly more opportunities available in all program areas than where volunteers are working. What recruitment strategies could be implemented to target more volunteers in program areas other than interpretation and maintenance?

The next series of questions/statements asked VIPs about the on-boarding process, long-term versus short-term strategies, and how positions are identified for volunteers. Following the bulleted summary is the table of statistics from the survey.

Summary:

- Slightly more than 25 percent of VIP survey respondents do not think they have adequate job descriptions for volunteers. 64% said they do have job descriptions for volunteers.
- Almost 89% of volunteers responding to the survey signed an agreement that clarifies their responsibilities.

¹¹ How volunteers responded to the question, "Which of the following work categories describes your primary duties? Please select one."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- 63% of VIP programs target positions toward long-term volunteers, while 58% target positions toward short-term engagements.
- About 70% of volunteer programs have an interviewing process for selecting volunteers. 52.9% of external survey respondents said they went through an interview process. About 30% of volunteers did not go through an interview process prior to starting their volunteer work.
- More than one-half of VIP programs (60%) do not perform background checks prior to offering a position to a volunteer. About one-quarter of the VIP programs do perform background checks.
- A significant majority (79.4%) of VIPs solicit input from staff to identify volunteer needs.
- For the most part, current volunteers do not participate in selecting new volunteers (63.6% of VIP managers responded that they do not use current volunteers in the selection process for new volunteers).
- About 64% said that their volunteers are regularly challenged to try new things. A corresponding question was asked to volunteers, "My volunteer manager...knows how to motivate and lead volunteers." 74.7% of volunteers believe their volunteer manager does well in terms of motivating and leading them.
- One-quarter of VIP programs do not have a plan to actively recruit volunteers, while almost another 25% do not maintain a list of current volunteer opportunities.
- About one-half responded that they do not have targets for retaining volunteers, and another 51.7% believe their recruitment goals are realistic.
- 79.5%--the vast majority of VIPs believe the program objectives are reasonable.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program that you manage/coordinate:

Percentages	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Do Not Know	External Survey Volunteers
1. We have adequate job descriptions for volunteers	64.3%	8.2%	27.1%	.4%	
2. Volunteers/VIP groups sign an agreement that clarifies their responsibilities	88.9%	5.9%	4.8%	.4%	
3. The program targets volunteer positions towards potential long-term volunteers	62.7%	19.3%	15.3%	2.7%	
4. The program targets volunteer positions towards short-term engagements	58.1%	20.8%	19.6%	1.5%	
5. We have an interviewing	69.8%	14.2%	16.0%	0.0%	52.9% SA/A ¹²

¹² External survey participants were asked, "I went through an interview/screening process prior to being selected."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Percentages	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Do Not Know	External Survey Volunteers
process for selecting volunteers (External Volunteer Question #19)					27.8% SD/D 14.0% somewhat... 5.3% DK
6. We do background checks prior to offering a position to a volunteer	24.7%	14.1%	60.4%	.8%	
7. We solicit input from staff to identify volunteer needs	79.4%	13.0%	5.9%	1.6%	
8. Volunteers participate in selecting volunteers	15.7%	18.8%	63.6%	2.0%	
9. Volunteers are <u>not</u> regularly challenged to try new things (External Volunteer Question #32)	15.8%	17.7%	63.8%	2.8%	
10. We have a plan to actively recruit volunteers for specific program needs.	62.9%	22.0%	25.1%	0.0%	
11. We do <u>not</u> maintain a current list of volunteer opportunities	22.9%	11.4%	65%	.8%	
12. Our volunteer recruitment goals are <u>not</u> realistic	16.4%	29.4%	51.7%	2.4%	
13. We do <u>not</u> have targets for retaining volunteers	46.6%	24.5%	26.0%	2.4%	
14. The objectives that have been set for our VIPs are reasonable	79.5%	13.4%	4.4%	2.8%	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

RECRUITMENT MARKETING, REPORTING & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

There is considerable agreement between general management and VIP Managers/Coordinators about how volunteers are recruited. There was no statistical difference by region or program area. The top four methods used to recruit volunteers include:

1. Word of Mouth
2. Current Volunteers
3. Friends/Family Referrals
4. Internet

NPS employees are an important source of recruitment: 25% of volunteers who responded reported discovering the VIP program through contact with a current employee. Approximately 18% found out about the VIP program from current volunteers and/or family and friends. Only 10% used the internet to research volunteer opportunities at the NPS.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge over the past 12 months, please respond to the following statements about the VIP program with which you primarily interact.

We use the following to recruit volunteers (check all that apply):

	General Management		VIP Coordinator/ Manager		External Volunteer Survey	
Response	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Internet	896	46.7% (4)	200	65.6% (3)	355	9.8%
Local/Regional Newspaper	546	28.5% (7)	128	42.0% (6)	425	11.8%
Other Publications	465	24.2% (8)	96	31.5% (8)		
Volunteer Organizations	842	43.9% (5)	144	47.2% (5)		
Other Organizations	583	30.4% (6)	108	35.4% (7)		
Community or Service Organization					430	11.9%
Word-of-Mouth	1310	68.3% (1)	240	78.7% (1)		
Friends/Family Referrals	925	48.2% (3)	182	59.7% (4)	643	17.8%
Current Volunteers	1305	68.0% (2)	237	77.7% (2)	631	17.6%
Current NPS Employee					907	25.1%
Wrote/Called Requesting Information					549	15.2%
Other					595	16.5%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The statistics that follow show:

- The majority of general management staff responding to the survey do not utilize the NPS VIP website or the InsideNPS website and,
- VIP Managers/Coordinators visit the sites infrequently.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge over the past 12 months, please respond to the following statements about the VIP program: 62. Thinking back over the past 12 months, how often do you visit the NPS VIP website (www.nps.gov/volunteer) for information?

Response	General Management		VIP Coordinator/ Manager	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
(1) I did not know this web site exists	638	38.7%	15	5.9%
(2) I cannot access the web from my work location	4	0.2%	1	0.4%
(3) I know about the web site, but I never access it	525	31.8%	23	9.0%
(4) 1-2 times	321	19.5%	62	24.3%
(5) 3-4 times	93	5.6%	49	19.2%
(6) 5-6 times	38	2.3%	20	7.8%
(7) 7-10 times	12	0.7%	28	11.0%
(8) Over 10 times	18	1.1%	57	22.4%

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the above website (www.nps.gov/volunteer):

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neither SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree DK = Do not Know	General Management	VIP Coordinator/ Manager
I am not able to easily access VIP information	7.9% SA/A 36.8% SD/D 25.3% N 30.0% DK	12.6% SA/A 56.3% SD/D 24.4% N 6.7% DK
The information is available to support me in doing my job	33.8% SA/A 5.7% SD/D 26.2% N	55.5% SA/A 7.9% SD/D 25.6% N

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Key: <i>SA = Strongly Agree</i> <i>A = Agree</i> <i>N = Neither</i> <i>SD = Strongly Disagree</i> <i>D = Disagree</i> <i>DK = Do not Know</i>	General Management	VIP Coordinator/ Manager
	34.3% DK	11.0%DK
The information posted is credible and current	22.8% SA/A 3.1% SD/D 27.8% N 46.3% DK	50.4%SA/A 5.5% SD/D 26.0% N 18.1% DK

Thinking back over the past 12 months, how often do you visit the VIP page on the NPS Intranet, InsideNPS (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=169&lv=3>)?

Response	General Management		VIP Coordinator/ Manager	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
(1) I did not know this web site exists	681	41.7%	53	20.9%
(2) I cannot access the web from my work location	10	0.6%	2	.8%
(3) I know about the web site, but I never access it	505	30.9%	30	11.8%
(4) 1-2 times	301	18.4%	70	27.6%
(5) 3-4 times	76	4.7%	34	13.4%
(6) 5-6 times	23	1.4%	19	7.5%
(7) 7-10 times	6	0.4%	14	5.5%
(8) Over 10 times	32	2.0%	32	12.6%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP page on the NPS Intranet, InsideNPS (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=169&lv=3>).

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neither SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree DK = Do not Know	General Management	VIP Coordinator/ Manager
1. I am not able to easily access VIP information	5.9% SA/A 35.7% SD/D 24.3% N 34.1% DK	12.6% SA/A 56.3% SD/D 24.4% N 6.7% DK
2. The information is available to support me in doing my job	30.1% SA/A 4.1% SD/D 26.6% N 39.2% DK	55.5% SA/A 7.9% SD/D 25.6% N 11.0% DK
3. The information posted is credible and current	20.3% SA/A 2.0% SD/D 28.5% N 49.2% DK	50.4% SA/A 5.5% SD/D 26.0% N 18.1% DK

It would benefit the VIP Program to explore the reasons that the online recruitment information is not more available or more frequently used.

The next four survey items asked general management and VIPs about volunteer statistics, program technology and reporting.

- 96.5% of VIPs and about 78% of general management said that they do keep volunteer statistics.
- 87.4% of VIPs said they keep these statistics updated (compared to 70% of general management).
- 64% of VIPs are prepared to report VIP statistics quarterly
- 70% of VIPs and about 58% of general management are satisfied with VIP program technology and reporting at the present time.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program:

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neither SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree DK = Don't Know	General Management	VIP Coordinator/ Manager
4. We do <u>not</u> keep volunteer statistics	2.8% SA/A 77.7% SD/D 4.0% N 15.5% DK	1.6% SA/A 96.4% SD/D 1.6% N 0.4% DK
5. We do <u>not</u> keep our statistics updated	3.8% SA/A 70.2% SD/D 7.1% N 18.9% DK	5.5% SA/A 87.4% SD/D 6.7% N 0.4% DK
6. We are <u>not</u> prepared to report VIP statistics quarterly	7.5% SA/A 59.8% SD/D 8.5% N 24.2% DK	28.4% SA/A 64.2% SD/D 6.7% N 0.7% DK
7. Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP program technology and reporting at the present time.	57.7% SA/A 5.4% SD/D 36.9% N	69.1% SA/A 9.9% SD/D 21.0% N

NPS would benefit from identifying:

1. Why the program statistics are not better managed, is this a time/resource or training/reporting problem?
2. Are there areas where programs statistics are well managed?
3. Leveraging those best practices to improve program statistics, which increases the information needed to run the program effectively.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

The majority of respondents would find a servicewide volunteer newsletter informative and would prefer to receive it electronically.

I would find a servicewide volunteer newsletter informative

Job Category	Yes	No
Line staff	65.7%	34.3%
General Management	67.6%	32.4%
VIP Manager/Coordinator	78.3%	21.7%

I would prefer that this volunteer newsletter be...

Job Category	Paper	Electronic	Both Paper & Electronic
Line staff	8.4	58.9	32.7
General Management	8.2	60.2	31.6
VIP Manager/Coordinator	6.7	60.4	32.9

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

TRAINING

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program with which you interact:



Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neither SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree DK = Do not Know	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Managers Coordinators	External Survey Volunteers
1. New volunteers do <u>not</u> receive orientation training immediately upon assignment (External Volunteer Question #21)	17.2% SA/A 43.5% SD/D 15.0% N 24.3% DK	16.6% SA/A 58.4% SD/D 11.5% N 13.5% DK	15.7% SA/A 75.0% SD/D 8.6% N .7% DK	14.3% SA/A ¹³ 71.2% SD/D 12.8% Somewhat 1.2% DK
2. New volunteers do <u>not</u> receive safety training immediately upon assignment (External Volunteer Question #22)	21.1% SA/A 36.5% SD/D 15.8% N 26.6% DK	17.9% SA/A 55.9% SD/D 11.6% N 14.6% DK	19.6% SA/A 68.3% SD/D 11.4% N .7% DK	19.7% SA/A ¹⁴ 62.3% SD/D 11.5% Somewhat 2.5% DK
3. Volunteers receive on-going training appropriate to their job(s) (External Volunteer Question #24)	51.8% SA/A 11.2% SD/D 15.7% N 21.3% DK	64.3% SA/A 9.9% SD/D 13.6% N 12.2% DK	81.9% SA/A 7.9% SD/D 9.1% N 1.1% DK	93.5% SA/A ¹⁵ 1.1% SD/D 5.0% Somewhat 0.4% DK
4. Volunteers receive scheduled safety training to maintain a low-risk work environment	30.3% SA/A 21.0% SD/D 19.7% N 29.0% DK	42.6% SA/A 20.6% SD/D 19.5% N 17.3% DK	40.0% SA/A 36.0% SD/D 22.0% N 2.0% DK	
5. Volunteers understand the purpose of the project on which they work and how it supports the larger NPS mission. (External Volunteer Question #36)	55.1% SA/A 9.6% SD/D 18.8% N 19.5% DK	66.2% SA/A 6.4% SD/D 15.4% N 12.0% DK	82.3% SA/A 5.1% SD/D 11.0% N 1.6% DK	86.5% SA/A 8.8% SD/D 8.2% Somewhat 2.5% DK

¹³ Actual question to volunteers: "I received orientation training before starting my volunteer job." Data was reversed for comparison purposes. Volunteer actual responses to statement: 71.2% SA/A (i.e. they DID receive orientation training), 14.3% SD/D, 12.8% Somewhat agree/somewhat disagree, 1.5% DK

¹⁴ Actual question to volunteers: "I received safety training before starting my volunteer job." Data was reversed for comparison purposes. Volunteer actual responses to statement: 62.4% SA/A, 19.7% SD/D, 11.5% Somewhat agree/somewhat disagree, 2.5% DK.

¹⁵ Actual question to volunteers: "I have the training I need to perform my volunteer job."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neither SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree DK = Do not Know	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Managers Coordinators	External Survey Volunteers
6. Project leaders are well trained to support volunteers	42.8% SA/A 15.4% SD/D 22.9% N 18.9% DK	44.6% SA/A 18.3% SD/D 25.5% N 11.6% DK	47.2% SA/A 22.1% SD/D 28.3% N 2.4% DK	
7. Our VIP Manager/Coordinator has the training they need to manage our VIP program.		48.8% SA/A 16.4% SD/D 18.7% N 16.1% DK		
8. Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP program training efforts in my area at this time (External Volunteer Question #28)	46.5% SA/A 14.6% SD/D 38.9% N 0.0% DK	49.3% SA/A 19.0% SD/D 31.7% N 0.0% DK	44.8% SA/A 27.8% SD/D 27.4% N 0.0% DK	78.4% SA/A 8.8% SD/D 8.2% Somewhat 2.6% DK

Training: Summary of Findings

In this section, there are statistical differences across the three internal surveys for all statements except #6.

When asked if new volunteers receive orientation training immediately upon assignment, fully three quarters of VIP Managers/Coordinators said they do, compared with 58.4% of general management and 43.5% of line staff. Responses for volunteers showed them in most agreement with managers/coordinators: 71.2% said they received orientation training.

- In looking at these statistics by program size, 63% of those from large programs believe new orientation training does **not** happen immediately, compared to 34.5% from small programs.
 - Why does the majority of line staff believe that volunteers are not receiving orientation training immediately on assignment? Research into orientation training at large versus small programs is necessary. Why is orientation training not occurring in a timely manner at large program sites? Who is doing orientation training well, and what can we learn from them?
- 68.3% of VIP Managers/Coordinators and 62.4% of volunteers believe "new volunteers receive safety training immediately upon assignment," compared to only 36.5% of line staff and 55.9% of general management. Looking across program size, there is a perception that training occurs less consistently at larger programs.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

“New volunteers do not receive safety training immediately upon assignment. “

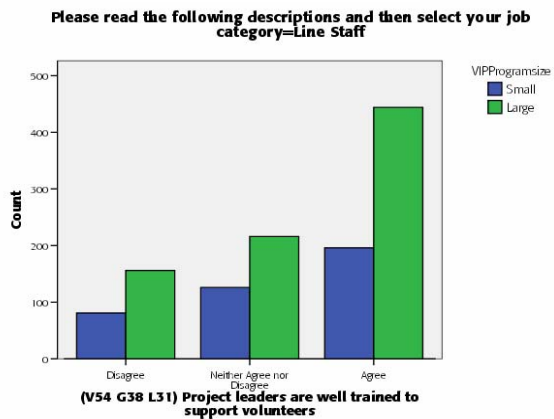
Below is the% by program size and job class that agrees with this statement.

Survey Group	Large Program	Small Program
VIP Manager/Coordinator	64%	36%
General Management	60.3%	39.7%
Line Staff	64%	36%

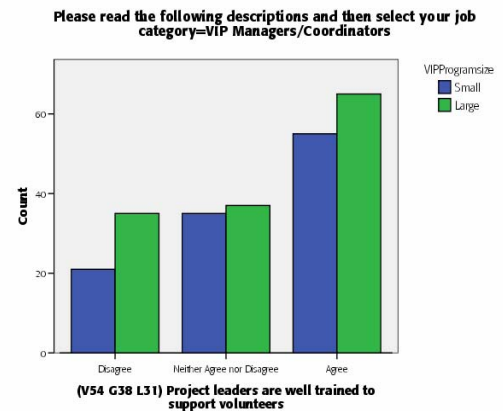
- The next statement, “Volunteers receive on-going training appropriate to their job(s)” also indicates a discrepancy in response by job classification, with VIP Managers/Coordinators (81.9%) agreeing with this statement, compared with 64.3% of general management and 51.8% of line staff. Are general management and line staff not aware of on-going training, or are volunteers not receiving the training they need?
 - In comparing this data to the question asked of volunteers, “I have the training I need to perform my volunteer job,” an impressive 93.5% believe they do. The potential next step is to dig deeper to understand why line staff have a significantly different perspective. Why do those having face-to-face contact with volunteers think volunteers do not have the training they need? What additional training needs to be provided?
- The statement, “Volunteers receive scheduled safety training to maintain a low-risk work environment,” shows a difference in response rates across job classifications. **Most importantly, the percentage that either strongly agrees or agrees is under 50%.** We need to explore where volunteer safety training is occurring, the specific types of training, and how frequently it is provided. To judge the effectiveness of training, we also may want to contrast job injury statistics in sites providing safety training with those which do not provide it. (Clearly, other variables, such as the type of site, etc., would need to be addressed.)
- “Volunteers understand the purpose of the project on which they work and how it supports the larger NPS mission” has a significant difference in perception across job categories. 55.1% of line staff either strongly agree or agree, while 66.2% of general management and 82.3% of VIP Managers/Coordinators responded in that way. This question was also asked of volunteers: 86.5% responded that they understand how their volunteer job fits into the overall NPS mission. Again, why do line staff and general management (to a lesser degree) have a distinctly different perception from VIP Managers and volunteers? Why do line staff and general management believe that volunteers do not understand how their work connects to the larger NPS mission?
- “Project leaders are well trained to support volunteers.” The overall response rate for this question across all job categories is under 50% in terms of strongly/agreeing with this statement. How can well trained project leaders perform more effectively? There is a statistical difference according to program size: respondents from larger programs perceive program leaders to be better trained to support volunteers than those responding from small programs. See the histograms below for response by job/program size.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

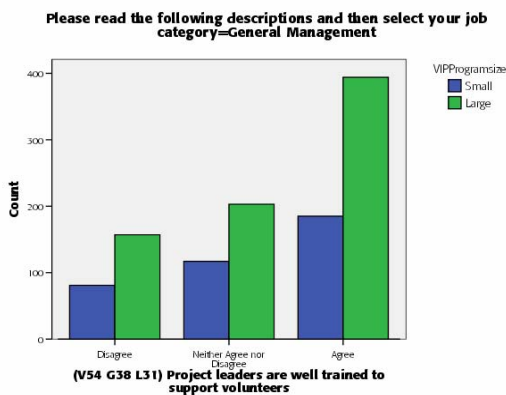
Line Staff: Program Size



General Management: Program Size

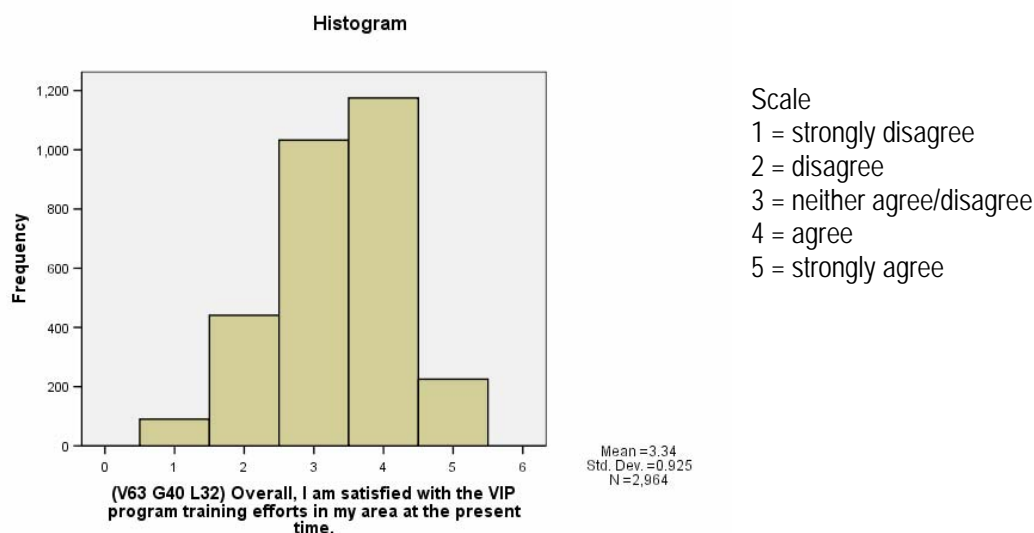


VIP Manager/Coordinator: Program Size



- The statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP program training efforts in my area at this time," generated higher response rates across all job categories in the strongly agree/agree and neither categories. There is a statistical difference in job categories for the strongly disagree/disagree response rate, with VIP Managers/Coordinators being the most dissatisfied (27.8%). There was no statistical variation by region or program size. **Volunteers are the most satisfied (78.4%) with VIP training efforts.**

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report



Other survey questions asked of line staff, and general management included:

- (1) The training they need to supervise volunteers,
- (2) Their effectiveness in handling difficult situations (asked of VIPs also) and,
- (3) Their understanding of how their role in the VIP program supports the overall NPS VIP goals.

We summarize their responses below:

1. The vast majority of line staff/general management believes they have the necessary training to supervise volunteers and to handle difficult situations as they arise (average of 78.8%).
2. A lesser percentage of VIPs think they have the training they need to handle difficult situations as they arise (63% compared to an average of 85% for line staff and general management).
3. An average of 87% of line staff and general management understand how their role in the VIP program supports the NPS VIP program.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program(s) with which you primarily interact:

	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Coordinators/ Management
1. I have the training I need to supervise volunteers	76.7% SA/A 17.6% SD/D 14.7% N 1.0% DK	80.8% SA/A 8.8% SD/D 10.1% N .3% DK	
2. I have the skills I need to handle difficult situations as they arise	81.5% SA/A 6.5% SD/D 10.8% N 1.2 DK	88.3% SA/A 3.4% SD/D 8.1% N .2% DK	63% SA/A 16.1% SD/D 20.9% N 0.0% DK
3. I understand how my role in the VIP program supports the NPS VIP program goals	74.5% SA/A 12.5% SD/D 9.8% N 3.2% DK	85.3% SA/A 4.8% SD/D 8.4% N 1.5% DK	

VIP Managers/Coordinators Only

The next set of questions (4—10) were asked only of VIP coordinators/managers. The summary of findings is listed below:

- Only about one-half of VIP managers educate employees about volunteerism and its benefits.
- 23.5% of VIP managers do not believe they have the training they need to manage their volunteer program; another 20% do not know where to get the training they need to be more effective in their VIP role.
- 50% of VIP managers do not provide volunteer management training to others.
- 66.3% said their supervisor is supportive of VIP managers getting the training they need.
- Only 34% of VIP managers are aware of innovative VIP program management ideas coming from other sites, regions, or organizations.
- About ¼ of VIP managers interact with other VIP managers on a regular basis.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program that you manage/coordinate:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
4. We educate our employees about volunteerism and its benefits to the site/area, the volunteer, and the NPS	51.8%	22.7%	24.7%	0.8%
5. I do not have the training I need to manage our volunteer program	23.5%	14.9%	61.2%	0.4%
6. I provide volunteer management training to others	31.1%	18.5%	50.0%	0.4%
7. I know where to get the training I need to manage the program	64.2%	15.7%	19.7%	0.4%
8. My supervisor is supportive of me obtaining the training I need to manage the program	66.3%	20.4%	11.7%	1.6%
9. I am aware of innovative VIP program management ideas coming from other sites/regions/organizations	34.1%	19.6%	43.9%	2.4%
10. I interact with other VIP program managers on a regular basis	24.0%	19.7%	56.3%	0.0%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

FEEDBACK, RECOGNITION & SUPERVISION

The following fourteen questions ask internal staff and volunteers' perspectives about communication/feedback, recognition and supervision. The summary of findings is listed below, followed by the table and percentages across all four surveys (as applicable).

- About 70% of volunteers said their VIP coordinator/manager solicits their suggestions and feedback regarding the volunteer program. From the line staff perspective, only about 40% think volunteers are regularly encouraged to provide feedback and about 53% of general management share that perspective as well.
- 86% of VIP managers said they have a recognition program for volunteers. Only 71% of volunteers are aware of such a program, and even fewer line staff (63%) knows that such a program exists.
- 52% of line staff and 64% of general management are clear about the tasks volunteers need to accomplish, compared to 83% of VIPs. Finding better ways to communicate, especially to line staff working day-to-day with volunteers is an important strategy to pursue.
- The majority of line staff, general management and VIP coordinators/managers believe their immediate supervisor listens to their concerns about the VIP program (average of 77.5%). A significantly lesser percentage (49.5%) thinks their supervisor provides adequate feedback to tell them how they are doing in their VIP supervisor role.
- There was a significant difference in VIP coordinators/managers perspective regarding having the flexibility needed to balance the various demands of their job (62% think they have the flexibility needed), compared to line staff (73%) and general management (70%). What additional flexibility do VIP managers need in order to be more effective?
- 80% of volunteers said their VIP coordinator/supervisor keeps them well informed in order to do their job. 65% of VIP managers said they believe volunteers regularly receive feedback about their work, compared to 52% of general management.
- 61% of VIP managers said attainment of VIP program goals is part of their performance evaluation, compared to 18% of general management.
- 92% of VIP managers responded that they keep current information on their volunteers, compared to 66% of general management.¹⁶



¹⁶ The external survey was mailed out to almost 6500 volunteers, and about 1500 were 'returned to sender' due to a lack of current address information. This is a 23% return rate.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- 52% of VIP managers said they know the drop out rate of volunteers at their site (35.5% of general management know the drop out rate at their site).
- The majority of VIP managers are not recognized as part of the management team at their site (55% responding that they are not, compared to 35% of general management).
- Overall satisfaction with VIP program supervision efforts seems low, with 48% of line staff satisfied, 53% of general management, and 62% of VIP managers. . Volunteers are most satisfied, with 77% reporting that they are satisfied with the leadership, management and support they receive as a volunteer.

	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Coordinator Manager (VIPs)	External Survey-Volunteers
1. Volunteers are not regularly encouraged to provide feedback (External Volunteer Question #33)	16.4% SA/A 39.5% SD/D 19.2% N 24.9% DK	13.0% SA/A 52.5% SD/D 17.9% N 16.6% DK	17.7% SA/A 67.5% SD/D 13.3% N 1.5% DK	8.6% SA/A ¹⁷ 69.4% SD/D 15.8% Somewhat 6.2% DK
2. We have a recognition program to acknowledge the work of volunteers (External Volunteer Question #51)	63.1% SA/A 8.9% SD/D 10.7% N 17.3% DK	74.2% SA/A 7.1% SD/D 9.1% N 9.6% DK	85.9% SA/A 6.7% SD/D 7.1% N .3% DK	71.0% SA/A ¹⁸ 7.8% SD/D 9.3% Somewhat 11.9% DK
3. We recognize volunteers regularly for their work (External Volunteer Question #50)	57.9% SA/A 13.1%SD/D 13.8% N 15.2% DK	67.1% SA/A 9.0% SD/D 14.1% N 9.8% DK	81.5% SA/A 9.8% SD/D 8.2% N .5% DK	88.5% SA/A ¹⁹ 1.9% SD/D 6.4% Somewhat 3.2% DK
4. We have a clear understanding about the tasks volunteers need to accomplish	51.6% SA/A 13.2% SD/D 17.8% N 17.4% DK	64.1% SA/A 10.3% SD/D 15.8% N 9.8% DK	82.7% SA/A 7.5% SD/D 9.8% N 0% DK	
Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to your supervisor. My supervisor:				
5. Listens to my concerns about the VIP program.	68.4% SA/A 7.9% SD/D 21.0% N	68.0% SA/A 7.0% SD/D 21.6% N	74.5% SA/A 13.4% SD/D 12.1% N	

¹⁷ Question asked to volunteers: "My supervisor...solicits my suggestions and feedback about the volunteer program." Data is reversed here for comparison purposes. Actual response to question as it was phased to volunteers: 69.4% SA/A (supervisor DOES solicit suggestions and feedback), 8/6% SD/D, 15.8% somewhat agree/somewhat disagree, 6.3% DK

¹⁸ Actual question asked to volunteers: "My site/area/program holds specific events to recognize volunteers."

¹⁹ Actual question asked to volunteers: "The work I do is appreciated by park staff."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Coordinator Manager (VIPs)	External Survey-Volunteers
	2.7% DK	3.4% DK	0.0% DK	
6. Provides adequate feedback to tell me how I am doing in my VIP supervisor role.	50.6% SA/A 17.4% SD/D 29.7% N 2.3% DK	50.2% SA/A 15.8% SD/D 30.5 N 3.5% DK	47.5% SA/A 26.3% SD/D 26.2% N 0.0 DK	
7. Provides the flexibility needed to balance the various demands of my job.	72.9% SA/A 11.0% SD/D 14.8% N 1.3% DK	69.6% SA/A 13.7% SD/D 14.7% N 2.0% DK	61.8%SA/A 22.4% SD/D 15.6% N 0.2% DK	
Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program with which you primarily interact:				
8. Volunteers do <u>not</u> regularly receive feedback about their work from their supervisor (External Volunteer Question #31)		11.7% SA/A 52.3% SD/D 17.0% N 19.0% DK	15.4% SA/A 64.9% SD/D 16.1% N 3.6% DK%	4.5% SA/A ²⁰ 80.4% SD/D 11.0% Somewhat 4.1% DK
9. Attainment of VIP program goals is part of my performance evaluation		17.8% SA/A 52.4% SD/D 22.5% N 7.3% DK	61.0% SA/A 25.2% SD/D 11.4% N 2.4% DK	
10. We keep current information on our volunteers (E.g., address, phone, email, emergency contact, interests, education)		66.0% SA/A 4.4% SD/D 9.9%N 19.7% DK	91.7% SA/A 4.3% SD/D 3.5% N .5% DK	
11. We accurately track hours/length of time volunteers work		79.0% SA/A 3.8% SD/D 6.5% N 10.7% DK	95.7 SA/A 2.0% SD/D 2.0% N .3% DK	
12. We do <u>not</u> know the drop-out rate of volunteers in our program area		17.1% SA/A 35.5% SD/D 18.2% N 29.2% DK	25.5% SA/A 51.9% SD/D 19.3% N 3.3% DK	
13. Our site's VIP Manager/Coordinator is recognized as part of the		36.4% SA/A 35.1 SD/D 14.0% N	27.8% SA/A 55.3% SD/D 19.3% N	

²⁰ Actual question asked to volunteers: "My supervisor...keeps me well informed in order to do my job." Data is reversed her for comparison purposes. Actual responses by volunteers based on how question was phased: 80.4% SA/A, 4.5% SD/D, 11.0% Somewhat agree/somewhat disagree, 4% DK.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Coordinator Manager (VIPs)	External Survey-Volunteers
management team.		14.5% DK	3.6% DK	
14. Overall, I am satisfied with my VIP program(s) supervision efforts at the current time. (External Volunteer Question #45)	47.7% SA/A 12.0% SD/D 40.3% N	53.0% SA/A 16.1% SD/D 30.9% N	61.8% SA/A 14.7% SD/D 23.5% N	77.2% SA/A ²¹ 10.4% SD/D 11.6% Somewhat 1.8% DK

VIP Coordinator/Managers Only

The following questions were asked only of VIP coordinators/managers; we wanted to know their perspectives on how effectively their supervisor supports them in their VIP coordinator role. In general:

- 70% said their supervisor is equally concerned with the quality and quantity of their work and involves them in decisions affecting their VIP program.
- 74% said their supervisor is accessible when they need assistance.
- Only 44% believe they are recognized for the work they do with the VIP program; another 43% said their supervisor inspires them to do their best work every day, relative to the VIP program.
- 40% receive coaching support to achieve their objectives.
- 58% said their supervisor is proactive in creating a positive work environment for volunteers; 60% of VIP managers said their supervisor encourages them to come up with new and better ways to do things.

Opportunities exist for supervisors to raise their level of awareness about the VIP program in order to provide even better support to the VIP Managers/Coordinators.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to your supervisor: My supervisor...

(Percentages)	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
1. (83.) Is equally concerned about the quality and quantity of my work	70.1%	11.0%	16.1%	2.8%
2. (84.) Involves me in decisions affecting our VIP program	69.4%	15.7%	14.5%	0.4%
3. (85.) Is not accessible to me when I need assistance	11.0%	15.3%	73.7%	0.0%

²¹ Actual question asked of volunteers: "Overall, I am satisfied with the leadership, management and support I receive as a volunteer."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

(Percentages)	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
4. (87.) Recognizes me for the work I do with the VIP program	43.6%	27.5%	28.1%	0.8%
5. (89.) Provides coaching to help me achieve my objectives	40.1%	26.2%	33.7%	0.0%
6. (90.) Is not proactive in creating a positive working environment for volunteers	22.8%	18.4%	57.6%	1.2%
7. (91.) Encourages me to come up with new and better ways to do things	60.3%	21.7%	18.0%	0.0%
8. (92.) Inspires me to do my best work every day relative to the VIP program	42.7%	31.4%	25.9%	0.0%

Next, VIP managers were asked about overall support they receive from their superintendent, employees/staff, the region, and WASO.

- Regional support is highest; with almost 70% saying they either strongly agree/agree that they are satisfied. Other results: employees/staff (67%) gave a similar response, with 57% satisfied with the support from their superintendent. Less than half (49%) were satisfied with support from WASO.

Overall, I am satisfied with the support I receive from:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
Superintendent	56.9%	19.4%	18.5%	5.2%
Employees/staff	66.8%	15.0%	16.6%	1.6%
Region	69.4%	20.2%	6.4%	4.0%
WASO	49.0%	31.6%	9.5%	9.9%

69% of VIP programs utilize partnership agreements with other organizations to assist in their program.

We have current partnership agreements with other organizations to assist us in our program (such as, but not limited to Friends groups, Local organizations, Volunteer organizations, Cooperating Associations, Concessions, other Federal, state, and/or local agencies).

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Mean = 1.39

Response	Count	Percent
(1) Yes	175	68.9%
(2) No	58	22.8%
(3) Do not know	21	8.3%

62% of VIP managers said they get the staff support need to manage their VIP program, while almost 28% said they do not.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program that you manage/coordinate/supervise:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
I do not get the staff support needed to manage the VIP program	26.7%	20.8%	51.8%	0.7%

Line Staff Only

The next series of three questions were asked specifically of line staff. We wanted to know their perceptions about direction and feedback pertaining to volunteers and to the overall program.

- 44% said volunteers are given the necessary attention and direction throughout their assignments.
- 40% said volunteers regularly receive feedback about their work.
- 28% said they are regularly encouraged to provide feedback on the VIP program.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program with which you interact:

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do not know
Volunteers are not given the necessary attention and direction throughout their assignments	16.0%	20.7%	44.3%	19.0%
Volunteers regularly receive feedback about their work	40.1%	22.8%	12.0%	25.1%
I am not regularly encouraged to provide VIP program feedback	31.9%	26.8%	28.1%	13.2%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

SAFETY

- When asked if volunteers understand NPS safety procedures, there were significant differences between groups. 83.4% of volunteers believe they understand procedures, compared to only 42% of line staff.
- When asked if NPS safety procedures are followed, only 47% of line staff agreed compared to 79% of VIP managers
- 38% of line staff believe that relative to the VIP program, emergency procedures are defined, compared to 61% of VIP managers.
- Overall satisfaction with VIP program safety efforts also show a significant difference, with only 44% of line staff satisfied, compared to 62% of VIP managers.

The reason for these different perspectives needs to be explored. One conclusion may be that line staff are closer to the actual work of volunteers and see that safety procedures need to be more consistently enforced. If this is true, then training and enforcement efforts should be increased.

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program with which you interact:

	Line Staff	General Management	VIP Coordinator/ Management (VIPs)	External Survey Volunteers
1. Volunteers understand NPS safety procedures <i>(External Volunteer Question #23)</i>	41.4% SA/A 13.9% SD/D 20.5% N 23.9% DK	57.2% SA/A 11.8% SD/D 16.7% N 15.3% DK	67.4% SA/A 11.0% SD/D 19.6% N 2.0% DK	83.4% SA/A 4.4% SD/D 1.03% Somewhat 1.9% DK
2. NPS safety procedures are followed	47.1% SA/A 8.1% SD/D 22.1% N 22.7% DK	62.3% SA/A 6.7% SD/D 16.5% N 14.5% DK	78.9% SA/A 5.9% SD/D 12.2% N 3.0% DK	
3. Emergency procedures are not clearly defined	19.3% SA/A 38.4% SD/D 20.3% N 22.0% DK	15.9% SA/A 62.1% SD/D 17.4% N 14.6% DK	20.9% SA/A 61.1% SD/D 16.5% N 1.5% DK	
4. Overall, I am satisfied with VIP program safety efforts at the present time.	44.0% SA/A 12.5% SD/D 43.5% N	54.4% SA/A 11.7% SD/D 33.9% N	61.8% SA/A 14.7% SD/D 23.5% N	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The following table shows that 93% of VIP managers say they track and report volunteer injuries, compared to 78% of general management. A much lesser percentage of general management performs job safety analyses for volunteer positions (about 40%).

Based on your experience and to the best of your knowledge, over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the VIP program with which you primarily interact:

	General Management	General Management	General Management
	Yes	No	Do not know
We track and report volunteer injuries	78.0%	1.5%	20.5%
We perform job safety analyses for our volunteer positions	40.5%	19.7%	39.8%
	VIP Coordinator/ Management	VIP Coordinator/ Management	VIP Coordinator/ Management
	Yes	No	Do not know
We track and report volunteer injuries	92.9%	2.4%	4.7%
We perform job safety analyses for our volunteer positions	41.2%	36.8%	22.0%

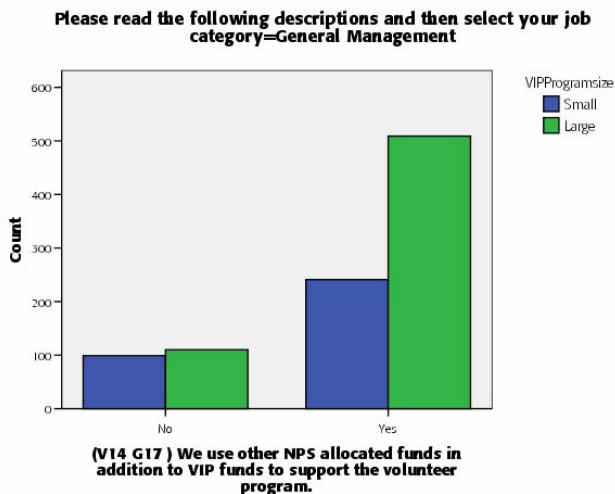


Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Funding Sources & FTE Allocation

When general management and VIP Managers/Coordinators were asked the question: “We use other NPS allocated funds in addition to VIP funds to support the volunteer program,” there was a difference in response by job category as well as program size. What is consistent: The majority of VIP programs (60.7% average) rely on other NPS allocated funds in addition to VIP funds to support the volunteer program.

General Management response by program area

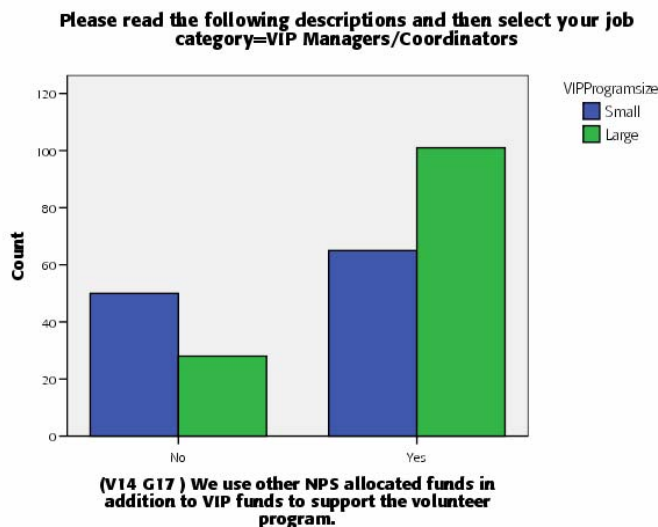


General Management-Overall

Mean = 1.72

Response	Count	Percent
(1) Yes	931	56.5%
(2) No	253	15.4%
(3) Do not know	463	28.1%

VIP Coordinator/Manager response by program



VIP Coordinator/Manager-Overall

Mean = 1.40

Response	Count	Percent
(1) Yes	166	64.8%
(2) No	78	30.5%
(3) Do not know	12	4.7%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The next question asked VIP Managers/Coordinators in FY 2004, *"How many total volunteer hours were worked in your site/area?"* The mean response was between 2501—10,000 hours. See table below:

Mean = 4.47

Response	Count	Percent
(1) Less than 500 hours	22	8.7%
(2) 501-1000 hours	11	4.3%
(3) 1001-2500 hours	35	13.8%
(4) 2501-5000 hours	43	17.0%
(5) 5001-10,000 hours	43	17.1%
(6) More than 10,000 hours	99	39.1%

General management and VIP Managers/Coordinators were asked to respond to the following statement:

I think the ideal management situation would be to have one FTE (Full-time Equivalency = 2080 hours) dedicated towards managing the VIP program for every "X" volunteer hours, where "X" is:

General Management

Mean = 4.24

Response	Count	Percent
(1) No more than 15,000 hours	310	18.9%
(2) No more than 25,000 hours	297	18.1%
(3) No more than 50,000 hours	214	13.0%
(4) No more than 100,000 hours	91	5.5%
(5) No more than 150,000 hours	17	1.0%
(6) No more than 200,000 hours	29	1.8%
(7) Do not know	686	41.7%

VIP Coordinator/Manager

Mean = 2.01

Response	Count	Percent
(1) No more than 15,000 hours	96	40.7%
(2) No more than 25,000 hours	75	31.8%
(3) No more than 50,000 hours	46	19.5%
(4) No more than 100,000 hours	12	5.0%
(5) No more than 150,000 hours	0	0.0%
(6) No more than 200,000 hours	7	3.0%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

In looking at the overall response, both groups agree that the ideal FTE to support the VIP program would be between 15,000-25,000 volunteer hours. The mean = slightly more than 25,000 volunteer hours per FTE management support.

N	Valid	1002
	Missing	2118
Mean		2.20
Mode		1
Std. Deviation		1.198

Response by GM and VIP combined		Frequency	Percent
1	No more than 15,000 hours	344	34.3%
2	No more than 25,000 hours	309	30.8%
3	No more than 50,000 hours	218	21.8%
4	No more than 100,000 hours	92	9.2%
5	No more than 150,000 hours	11	1.1%
6	No more than 200,000 hours	28	2.8%
	Total	1002	100.0%
	Do not know	523	
	System	1595	
	Total	2118	
Total		3120	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The next question asked general management and VIP Managers/Coordinators, “What is the number of FTEs (Full-time Equivalency = 2080 hours) currently dedicated to managing your site’s VIP program?”

General Management

VIP Coordinator/Manager

Mean = 4.01

Response	Count	Percent
(1) ¼ FTE	642	39.1%
(2) ½ FTE	156	9.5%
(3) ¾ FTE	60	3.7%
(4) 1-2 FTE	185	11.3%
(5) 3-5 FTE	19	1.2%
(6) 6-9 FTE	5	0.3%
(7) 10 or more	7	0.3%
(8) Do not know	568	34.6%

Mean = 2.90

Response	Count	Percent
(1) ¼ FTE	132	52.6%
(2) ½ FTE	32	12.7%
(3) ¾ FTE	12	4.8%
(4) 1-2 FTE	24	9.6%
(5) 3-5 FTE	1	0.4%
(6) 6-9 FTE	2	0.8%
(7) 10 or more	2	0.8%
(8) Do not know	46	18.3%

General Management VIP Coordinator/Manager Combined Responses		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	0.25 FTE	662	61.4%
	0.50 FTE	159	14.7%
	0.75 FTE	57	5.3%
	1-2 FTE	168	15.6%
	3-5 FTE	17	1.6%
	6-9 FTE	7	.6%
	10 or more FTE	9	.8%
	Total	1079	100.0%
Missing	Do not know	460	
	System	1581	
	Total	2041	
Total		3120	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

EXTERNAL SURVEY OF VOLUNTEERS—SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overview of Survey Process

This summary is based on 3611 completed responses, from a total of 9000 surveys sent to the NPS volunteer population. The survey was available in both electronic (web) and paper forms. We encouraged everyone with internet access to complete the web survey, as this would save considerable time for respondents and information collectors alike, as well as significantly reducing paperwork. Our efforts, including follow-up correspondence, enabled us to achieve a 30% response rate overall.

The survey was designed to elicit information about the perspective of NPS volunteers: What they thought was working well, and what they thought could be improved. The information collected can help VIP management/staff assess the VIP program to improve overall program accountability; articulate best practices, and identify needs and directions for program growth. To accomplish this goal, this survey was designed to gather information about:

- Overall demographics of our current volunteer population
- How to best attract and retain volunteers
- Recruitment and training practices
- Management practices and overall support of volunteers by program managers/coordinators
- Rewards, recognition and overall satisfaction of the volunteer experience.



The design of the survey instrument and methods for conducting this research closely followed Dilman's Total Design Method (TDM). However, in keeping with the principles of the paperwork elimination act, the TDM was modified for this study by not sending out a third and fourth follow-up letter/survey.

The TDM methodology involves designing a survey that is relatively easy to complete along with written contact information that encourages response by highlighting the importance of study participation and the social utility of the study. An initial questionnaire and cover letter was sent to all individuals in the study sample. After one week, a follow-up letter was mailed encouraging participants to return a completed survey. For email participants, the follow-up reminder notice was sent via email.

The goal of the external survey was to gather data for the following potentially statistically significant variables: volunteers by region and the volunteer's job category (administration, campground host, cultural resource management, general management, interpretation, maintenance, natural resource management, and protection/law enforcement). Each volunteer was be coded by region and his or her volunteer job category.

Out of a total of 362 sites with active volunteer programs that report volunteer statistics each year, 82 sites, or a little over a quarter, did not respond to the information collection request. The reasons for not responding were varied, if given at all. It's important to note that, at any given time, certain conditions may prevent park staff from responding in a timely manner, or at all in some cases. Those conditions may include, but are not limited to: staffing levels, visitation

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

levels, time constraints, and season. Some park officials did not provide information nor did they provide a reason. Others cited one or more of these reasons for non-submittal. A number of park officials expressed a concern for the volunteers' privacy and stated that they did not want to break the trust that they had built with them. In response, the Washington office explained that, according to the privacy act, the information requested was appropriate and permissible for the reasons stated. However, some park officials with the privacy concerns still did not comply. When notified of the importance of this request in maintaining a random and confidential sampling of all NPS volunteers, as well as not creating a non-response bias, the information was still denied. The Washington office then explained the value of the volunteers' opinions in this process and that park staff should not deliberately and knowingly deny their volunteers a voice in this survey. Sites that still did not respond are listed in the appendix of this summary report. We were able to obtain contact information for more than 20,000 volunteers, from which we developed a random sample of about 9,000 volunteers to invite to take the survey.

Based upon the potential respondent universe, we distributed all available volunteer contacts within the corresponding intersections of region and volunteer job category variables. It was not possible to receive name/contact information for 100% of the volunteers (the potential respondent universe) due to reasons stated previously. However, according to information collected from NPS staff most familiar with the VIP program, there was confidence in the ability of VIP managers to collect the numbers required to have a statistically valid sample.

This summary is based on 3611 responses to the external volunteer survey. The survey was conducted between August 25th and October 13th, 2006. Overall, volunteers participating in the survey are an extremely positive and motivated group. They donate hundreds of thousands of hours to the National Park Service and many intend to continue doing so.

LOGISTICS

The first twelve questions in the survey were designed to capture demographic information about the volunteers in national parks. This baseline of data is intended to assist NPS VIP staff in understanding current trends about NPS volunteers. With this information, it will be possible to tailor services to best meet the needs of this group. The questions were designed to gather information about:

- (1) The regions in which people volunteer their services
- (2) The type of work they do as volunteers
- (3) The average age of volunteers
- (4) The current employment status of those who chose to volunteer services
- (5) Any disabilities/impairments of the volunteer population
- (6) Gender of volunteers
- (7) Race/Ethnic background of volunteers
- (8) Volunteers' primary language and other languages known
- (9) Volunteers' highest level of education
- (10) Volunteers' total household income in 2005 before taxes.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The Northeast region has the most number of respondents (22%), followed by the Intermountain region with 17.2%.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Alaska	70	2.0%
	2 Intermountain	612	17.2%
	3 Mid west	528	14.8%
	4 National Capital	328	9.2%
	5 Northeast	785	22.0%
	6 Pacific West	572	16.0%
	7 Southeast	576	16.1%
	8 WASO	82	2.3%
	99 Do Not Know	15	.4%
	Total	3568	100.0%
Missing	System	43	
Total		3611	

The following table shows the majority of respondents work in the area of interpretation (27.3%), followed by maintenance (22.9%).

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Administration	159	4.6%
	2 Campground Host	369	10.8%
	3 Cultural Resources	324	9.4%
	4 General Management	105	3.1%
	5 Interpretation	936	27.3%
	6 Maintenance	785	22.9%
	7 Natural Resources	492	14.3%
	8 Protection/Law Enforcement	261	7.6%
	Total	3431	100.0%
Missing	System	180	
Total		3611	

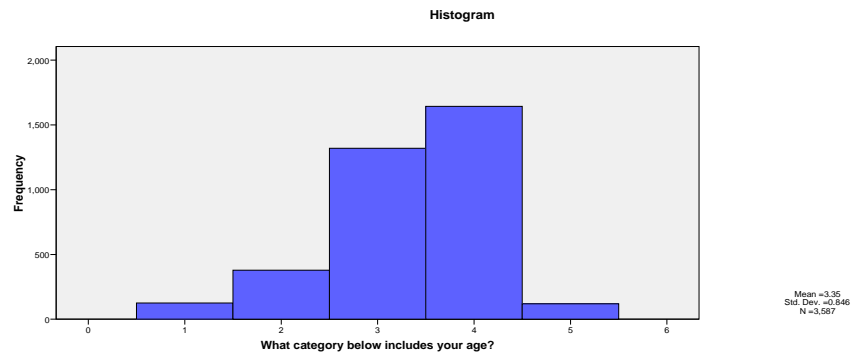
Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

DEMOGRAPHICS

While 45.8% of volunteers are between 61-80 years old, the next highest percentage of volunteers (36.8%) is between the ages of 41-60.

Age		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 10 to 20	126	3.5%
	2 21 to 40	378	10.5%
	3 41 to 60	1320	36.8%
	4 61 to 80	1644	45.8%
	5 More than 80	119	3.3%
	Total	3587	100.0%
Missing	System	24	
Total		3611	

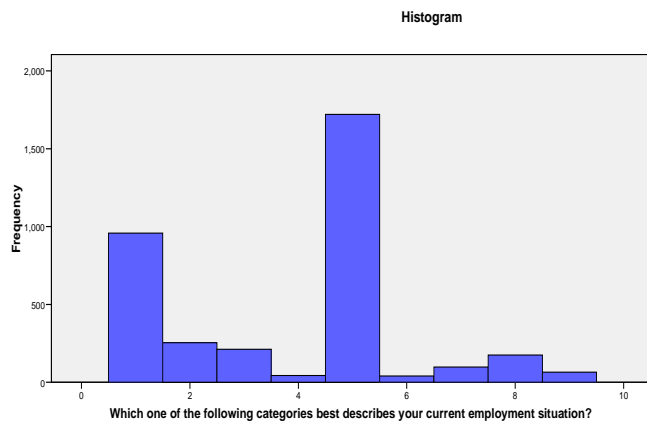
The histogram below gives an interesting visual to the percentage of volunteers by age.



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Almost one-half (48.2%) of volunteers are retired, while another one-quarter (26.9%) have full-time jobs.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
	1 Working full-time for pay	958	26.9%
	2 Working part-time for pay	254	7.1%
	3 Self-employed/consultant	212	5.9%
	4 Currently seeking work/unemployed	44	1.2%
	5 Retired	1720	48.2%
	6 Permanently disabled	40	1.1%
	7 Homemaker/Caregiver	98	2.7%
	8 Student	175	4.9%
	9 Other	65	1.8%
	Total	3566	100.0
Missing	System	45	
Total		3611	



Graph showing current employment situation for volunteers.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

The majority of volunteers is able-bodied, Caucasian and use English as their primary language for speaking.

- 94.8% of volunteers have no disability/impairment that requires accommodation.
- 98.4% are not Hispanic or Latino.
- 95.4% of those who volunteer are white/Caucasian.
- 99.3% prefer English for speaking.
- 11.5% can also speak Spanish.

Slightly more men (56.5%) than women (43.5%) volunteer.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Female	1558	43.5%
	2 Male	2021	56.5%
	Total	3579	100.0%
Missing	System	32	
Total		3611	

86.1% of those who volunteer have earned a degree beyond high school. 29.5% of volunteers hold masters, doctoral, or a professional degree. Another large group, 46.2%, has either some college/associate degree, or a four year college degree.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Less than high school	106	3.0%
	2 High school graduate	388	10.9%
	3 Some college or associate	878	24.6%
	4 Four year college degree	775	21.7%
	5 Some graduate school	372	10.4%
	6 Masters, doctoral, or professional degree	1056	29.5%
	Total	3575	100.0%
Missing	System	36	
Total		3611	

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

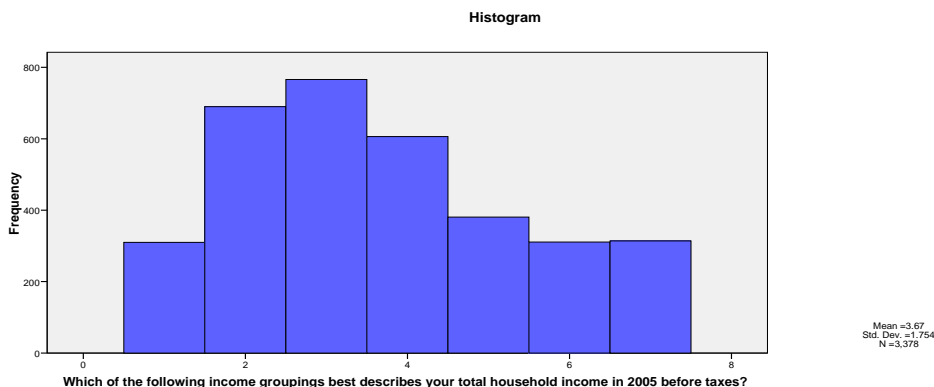
22.7% of volunteers have an income of \$40,000-\$59,999, while another 20.4% made \$20,000 to \$39,000 in the FY 2005.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Less than \$20,000	310	9.2%
	2 \$20,000 to \$39,000	690	20.4%
	3 \$40,000 to \$59,999	766	22.7%
	4 \$60,000 to \$79,000	606	17.9%
	5 \$80,000 to \$99,999	381	11.3%
	6 \$100,000 to \$129,999	311	9.2%
	7 \$130,000 or more	314	9.3%
	Total	3378	100.0%
Missing	System	233	
Total		3611	

ATTRACTING/RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

The following eight questions (numbers 13—18 in the survey) were designed to elicit what motivates people to volunteer for the NPS. This information will enable us to evaluate current and best practices as well as identify future goals for improvement. The questions are designed to gather information about:

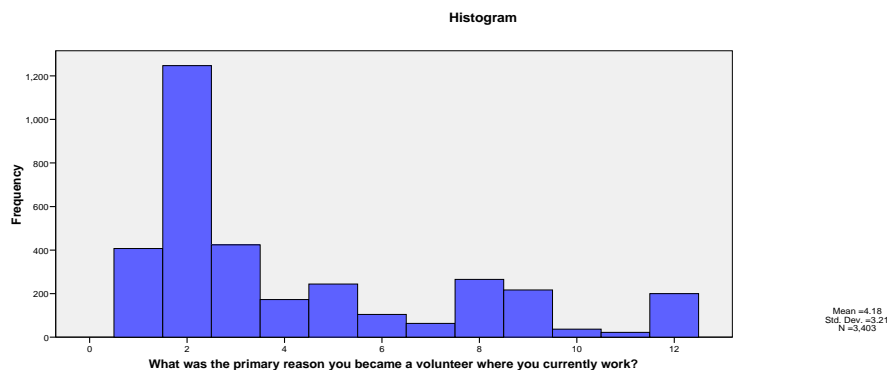
- The motivations of volunteers—why they chose the NPS as a place to volunteer
- The level of volunteering (a specific event—more than one volunteer job)
- The length of time people tend to volunteer
- The (average?) number of hours on a yearly basis people volunteer their services
- How volunteers learn about opportunities at the NPS (e.g., word of mouth, Internet, newspaper).



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

More than a third (36.6%) of volunteers are motivated by their interest in a particular program.

What was the primary reason you volunteer where you work?		Frequency	Valid Percent
	1 Interest in the National Park Service and/or NPS Mission	407	12.0%
	2 Interest in a particular site/area/program	1247	36.6%
	3 Interest in a specific project	424	12.5%
	4 Concern for the environment	173	5.1%
	5 Concern for historic preservation	244	7.2%
	6 I was looking for an activity to fill my time	104	3.1%
	7 I wanted to participate in an activity while improving my health	63	1.9%
	8 I wanted to give something back to my community	265	7.8%
	9 I was asked to volunteer	217	6.4%
	10 As a way to meet new people	37	1.1%
	11 To fulfill a community service hours requirement or commitment	22	.6%
	12 Other	200	5.9%
	Total	3403	100.0%
Missing	System	208	
Total		3611	



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

About fifty percent (49.9%) of volunteers have a specific on-going volunteer job.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
	1 I volunteered for a specific event (up to one day)	379	11.0%
	2 I volunteer for a number of events	785	22.7%
	3 I have a specific, on-going volunteer job	1725	49.9%
	4 I have more than one volunteer job	570	16.5%
	Total	3459	100.0%
Missing	System	152	
Total		3611	

25% have been volunteering for 1-3 years. 20.5% have been volunteering between 5-10 years. Almost another 20% have been volunteering between 3-5 years. **About 40% of current volunteers have been working for the NPS between 3 and 10 years.**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Less than 6 months	396	11.2%
	2 6 months to 1 year	226	6.4%
	3 Between 1 and 3 years	883	25.0%
	4 Between 3 and 5 years	689	19.5%
	5 Between 5 and 10 years	724	20.5%
	6 10 years or more	620	17.5%
	Total	3538	100.0%
Missing	System	73	
Total		3611	

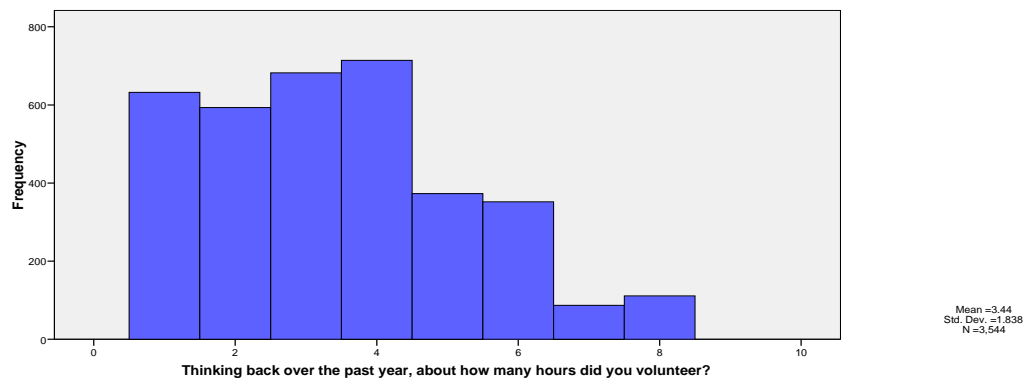
Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

About 40% of volunteers averaged between 51-300 hours of work time in the past year.

- 19.2% average 51-100 hours per year.
- 20.1% average 101-300 hours of service per year.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
	1 Less than 20	632	17.8%
	2 Less than 50	593	16.7%
	3 51-100	682	19.2%
	4 101-300	714	20.1%
	5 301-500	373	10.5%
	6 501-1000	352	9.9%
	7 1001-1500	87	2.5%
	8 1501 or more	111	3.1%
	Total	3544	100.0%
Missing	System	67	
Total		3611	

Histogram



Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

One in four volunteers – a significant 25.1% - heard about their volunteer job through a current NPS employee. *See page 18 to compare these findings to how the NPS markets to volunteers.*

Response	Count	Percent
A current NPS employee	907	25.1%
A current NPS volunteer	637	17.6%
Friend or family member	643	17.8%
Community or service organization	430	11.9%
Wrote or called requesting information and/or application	549	15.2%
Internet	355	9.8%
News Media	425	11.8%
Other	594	16.5%

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

The next eleven survey questions (19—29) were designed to gather statistics about the selection processes used to engage volunteers and identify the training opportunities available to them. This information enables us to evaluate current and best practices as well as identify opportunities for improvement. The questions in this section are designed to collect data from volunteers about:

- Screening and interview processes being used across the regions
- Their understanding of the job description
- Specific types of training received, including orientation, safety, and other training necessary to perform specific job duties
- The adequacy of supplies required to perform job duties
- Their knowledge of other volunteer opportunities available
- Their overall satisfaction about training and recruitment practices.

Overall, the results show that volunteers feel positive about these items including having a clear understanding of their job, orientation and on-going training. The lowest ratings pertain to

- (1) The interview/screening process for volunteers,
- (2) Safety training prior to starting the volunteer job, and
- (3) Overall satisfaction with recruitment activities at their site/area/program.

- When we asked if volunteers went through an interview/screening process prior to being selected, 52.9% responded favorably (either strongly agree or agree), while slightly more than one-quarter (27.8%) responded unfavorably (either strongly disagree or disagree).
- An outstanding majority (92%) of volunteers believe they have a clear understanding of the job description details for the work they do.
- 71.2% said they received orientation training prior to starting their volunteer job, and 62.4% said they received safety training prior to starting.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

- More than ¾ of respondents (83.4%) understand all of the safety procedures required to perform their jobs. (Contrast this with results showing that only slightly more than half of internal staff ----average 55%--- thinks volunteers understand job related safety procedures.)
- 93% said they have the training they need to perform their jobs, and another 84% believe they have the supplies required to be effective in their positions.
- 72% said they are aware of other volunteer opportunities.
- 83% perceive their VIP coordinator/manager/supervisor to have the training needed to lead the volunteer program.
- 80.4% either strongly agree or agree that they are satisfied with the training they receive.
- 63.2% strongly agree or agree that they are satisfied with recruitment activities.

The following table provides more detail for the bulleted items above:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do Not Know
1. I went through an interview/screening process prior to being selected	52.9%	14.0%	27.8%	5.3%
2. I have a clear understanding of the job description details for the work I do	92.7%	5.0%	1.8%	0.5%
3. I received orientation training before starting my volunteer job	71.2%	12.8%	14.4%	1.6%
4. I received safety training before starting my volunteer job	62.4%	15.3%	19.8%	2.5%
5. I understand all of the safety procedures to perform my job	83.4%	10.3%	4.4%	1.9%
6. I have the training I need to perform my volunteer job	93.1%	5.1%	1.2%	0.6%
7. I have the supplies I need to perform my volunteer job	84.0%	11.4%	4.1%	0.5%
8. I know about other volunteer opportunities available at my site/area/program	72.1%	14.6%	8.7%	4.6%
9. The volunteer manager/coordinator/supervisor has the training she/he needs to lead the volunteer program	83.2%	7.5%	3.0%	6.3%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do Not Know
10. Overall, I am satisfied with the training I receive as a volunteer at the present time.	80.4%	8.2%	8.8%	2.6%
11. Overall, I am satisfied with the VIP recruitment activities at my site/area/program.	63.2%	12.3%	10.1%	14.4%

LEADING/MANAGING/SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

The next sixteen survey questions (30—45) were designed to collect information with the intention of sustaining an appropriate level of professional volunteer administrators and ensure sufficient and consistent resources for effective volunteer program management at all levels. The information can be used to determine how to best utilize those who are asked to oversee, manage and support the work of volunteers. This information enables us to evaluate current and best practices as well as identify future goals for improvement. Specifically, these questions focus on the ability of the VIP manager to:

- Resolve issues and deal effectively with conflict
- Communicate information important to:
 - Volunteer job performance
 - Understanding how volunteer time supports the NPS mission and program growth
 - The role volunteers have in the NPS
- Solicit suggestions and feedback from volunteers about the VIP program
- General availability of VIP management to volunteers for information and support
- Respect of VIP management and staff shown towards volunteers.

In general, volunteers have very positive responses when asked about the management of their volunteer program. A significant majority believes that their supervisor:

- Resolves issues that arise (78.2%)
- Keeps them well informed (80.4%) and motivated (74.8%) to do their jobs
- Solicits their suggestions and input about the volunteer program (69.4%) ,and
- Has a realistic expectation of volunteers (82.8%).

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based upon your experience as a volunteer over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: "My volunteer manager/coordinator/supervisor..."

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Resolves issues that arise	78.2%	9.7%	3.3%	8.8%
2. Keeps me well informed in order to do my job	80.4%	11.0%	4.5%	4.1%
3. Knows how to motivate and lead volunteers	74.8%	13.4%	5.6%	6.2%
4. Solicits my suggestions and feedback about the volunteer program	69.4%	15.8%	8.6%	6.2%
5. Has realistic expectations of volunteers	82.8%	8.7%	2.8%	5.7%

The next group of survey questions (specify numbers since you have previously) was designed to obtain the volunteers' perspectives about the general availability of VIP management. We also wanted to know if volunteers feel respected by VIP management. Results show a high level of satisfaction:

- The majority of volunteers do not need more of their supervisor's time (72.7%).
- 86.5% understand how their volunteer job fits into the overall NPS mission.
- Less than one-half are interested in more information about their area's site/area's issues.
- 43.8% agree that their particular volunteer program is growing; about one-quarter do not know.
- 58% do not think staff is concerned about jobs being lost to volunteers; 25% of the respondents said they did not know.
- About 88% believe that they play an essential role at their site/area/program. A significantly large group (77%) is satisfied overall with the leadership, management and support they receive as volunteers.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based upon your experience as a volunteer over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do Not Know
6. I need more of my volunteer manager/coordinator/ supervisor's time	7.9%	15.4%	72.7%	4.0%
7. I understand how my volunteer job fits into the overall NPS mission	86.5%	8.3%	2.2%	3.0%
8. I am interested in more information about my site's/area's issues, etc.	48.0%	22.5%	25.7%	3.8%
9. I could give more to the volunteer program if it were better managed and supported	16.2%	14.8%	63.9%	5.1%
10. The volunteer program I participate in is growing	43.8%	17.9%	15.2%	23.1%
11. The volunteer program has become so large it makes management of the program difficult	3.7%	8.4%	68.6%	19.3%
12. Park staff are concerned that their jobs will be lost to volunteers	8.4%	8.3%	58.3%	25.0%
13. Volunteers play an essential role at my site/area/program	87.9%	5.9%	2.3%	3.0%
14. Overall, I am satisfied with the leadership, management and support I receive as a volunteer.	77.2%	11.6%	10.4%	0.8%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

OVERALL VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

The last set of thirteen survey questions (46—58) focused on the overall volunteer experience and the methods used to reward and recognize their contributions. This information allows us to evaluate current and best practices as well as identify future goals for improvement. Topics included:

- How rewarding/fulfilling volunteers found their experience with NPS
- Tangible results they noticed as a result of their efforts
- How much volunteers enjoyed working with NPS staff and other volunteers
- What volunteers experienced regarding how park staff and visitors recognize, respect and appreciate their contributions
- The frequency and type of events held to recognize volunteers
- The volunteers' level of pride in the work they do, e.g., would they encourage others to volunteer?
- What stands out as working well in the VIP program
- Ideas to improve the VIP program and the volunteers' overall experience.



Overall, volunteer experience ratings are very favorable. The lowest rating in this category pertained to the fairness of the recognition system. 70.9% are aware of specific volunteer recognition events at their site/area/program. Almost two thirds (64%) rate the award system to recognize volunteers as fair. To improve matters, we need to explore ways to ensure that recognition, appreciation and award systems are consistent through the NPS

The other ratings in this category are extremely positive. In summary:

- About 95% said their volunteer experiences are rewarding to them. Another 92.7% see visitors benefiting from volunteers' contributions.
- For 82% of the respondents, volunteering provides social stimulation; their interactions with people are a significant reason for volunteering. 79% said they feel a sense of ownership at the site where they volunteer.
- About 89% believe that park staff appreciates their volunteer services. More than 9 in 10 (92%) would encourage others to volunteer. Close to that number (87%) plan to continue volunteering at their site/area/program.
- 92% said they are treated with respect by park or partner organization staff.
- 91% are either very satisfied or satisfied with their volunteer experience.
- 79.5% of those supervising volunteers are paid staff.
- 75.1% say their VIP manager/coordinator is NPS paid staff.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Based upon your experience as a volunteer over the past 12 months, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Do Not Know
My volunteer experience is very rewarding to me	94.5%	4.1%	0.8%	0.6%
I see a positive result for visitors and/or site/area/program resources as a result of my contribution	92.7%	4.0%	0.9%	2.4%
The people I interact with are a significant reason for volunteering	82.0%	11.7%	5.3%	1.0%
I have a sense of ownership in my site/area/program	78.9%	13.1%	6.4%	1.6%
The work I do is appreciated by park staff	88.6%	6.4%	1.9%	3.1%
My site/area/program holds specific events to recognize volunteers	70.9%	9.4%	7.8%	11.9%
The award system to recognize volunteers is fair	64.0%	10.7%	3.8%	21.5%
I would encourage friends, family, colleagues, etc. to volunteer	91.7%	5.3%	1.7%	1.3%
I will continue volunteering at my site/area/program	87.2%	4.2%	2.9%	5.7%
I am treated with respect by park or partner organization staff	92.2%	5.2%	1.6%	1.0%

Overall, how satisfied are you with your volunteer experience?

Response	Count	Percent	Combined%
Very Dissatisfied	110	3.1%	3.9% SD/D
Dissatisfied	27	0.8%	
Somewhat Dissatisfied and Somewhat Satisfied	181	5.0%	5.0%
Satisfied	870	24.6%	90.9%
Very Satisfied	2345	66.3%	
Do Not Know	6	0.2%	0.2%

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

OVERVIEW OF THEMES FROM SURVEY COMMENTS

The following summary includes themes and sample comments from the two open-ended questions on each of the internal and external surveys, including the VIP Managers/Coordinators (Q123 & 124), Line Staff (Q51&51), general management (82 & 83) and Volunteers (Q57 & 58).

VIP COORDINATORS/MANAGERS COMMENTS Q 123

Q 123. Thinking about the VIP program describe one thing that works well.

Of 217 entries, many of which hold multiple examples of what is going well:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

116 (53%) commented on how well the program is administered on a local, regional and national level, and how essential the program is to the NPS.

Comments include:

"One thing that works well: The ability to creatively manage your VIP Program, depending upon the needs of your park volunteers. On a final note: Both [name] NCR VIP Coordinator) and [name] (WASO VIP Coordinator) have done wonders for the overall program. They both come with incredible energy and have provided excellent training and funding opportunities."

"The loyalty and dedication of VIPs has been essential to presenting varied programs in the park - visitor services, tour operation, senior off-site programs, children's reading programs, Kid's Corner programs, special events and docent tours."

"Our VIP Program works because of many strong partnerships with our Parks Conservancy, SCA, and local corporate groups who have mutual respect and goals. The Parks Conservancy Staff and NPS staff who work with volunteers have all participated in the course "How to Succeed with Volunteers In Parks." The learning did not stop in the classroom. The VIP Managers/Supervisors meet monthly to discuss any pertinent VIP issues and thus act as a team in the field. Management of both the partners and NPS support the field in all facets of the VIP Program. Partnerships work at my park because of mutual need and respect for the NPS Volunteers in Parks program."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Recruitment (includes information technology support)

31 (14%) commented on how well the recruitment process worked, including 19 which referenced local and national online recruitment websites.

Comments include:

"The current web based volunteer application system has been keeping a steady stream of applications coming our way."

"Recruitment is something we do not have to work for. Volunteers are beating the doors down to spend time providing volunteer service contributions."

"VIP Recruitment for special events and specific VIP jobs/projects is fantastic, the NPS brand carries high credibility!"

Category: Volunteer Attitudes

24 (11%) commented on how volunteer's attitudes affected the public's appreciation of the park system.

Comments include:

"VIPs (because they are volunteering) are much more appreciative of their stewardship responsibilities than the average visitor, and often go out of their way in caretaking of the site."

"The best thing about our volunteer program are that those who truly want to be here in the park are well established and very dedicated volunteers. They work hard and they believe in what they do. I applaud them for their dedication and their efforts on our behalf."

"the volunteers that keep on giving from the heart and soul regardless of the tasks they are asked to do."

Category: Rewards and Recognition

21 (9.5%) commented on how well the NPS recognizes and rewards volunteers.

Comments include:

"Our cooperating association pays for two end-of-season Volunteer Award Dinners. Everyone, paid staff and volunteers, get a free meal. At the end of the meal, supervisors say a few words thanking their volunteers and I, the Volunteer Coordinator, give them their earned awards. Volunteers tell me that this is the nicest way to show appreciation for the work they do. We could not provide such a nice evening for the volunteers without the funding from our cooperating association."

"Recognition of Volunteer efforts improves morale and boosts retention and quality of service."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

"Providing housing for the 20-week, full-time volunteer positions work well. So does our intensive training for our interpretive volunteers."

Category: Working Relationships

14 (6%) commented on how well volunteer and NPS staff work together.

"Our volunteers come to us because they want to work at this site, and with this staff. They find us mostly by word of mouth and because of their experiences in visiting the site. Once they are working here, our volunteers and the paid staff are genuinely affectionate and respectful of each other as persons and as coworkers."

VIP MANAGERS COMMENTS Q 124

Q 124. Thinking about the VIP program describe one improvement you would recommend.

Of 223 entries, many of which hold multiple examples of what needs improvement:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

83 (37%) commented on Supervision/Management issues, a majority of which addressed the lack of available staff time to manage the program (level of FTEs).

Typical Comments include

"The lowest amount of FTE devoted to the VIP program that this survey allowed me to select was 1/4, but there is nowhere near that amount of time devoted to the program at Lava Beds. The recruitment methods that we have are not effective or adequate, and there is nothing being done right now to encourage the growth of our VIP program. If encouraging volunteerism in America is truly a national priority, I would recommend that something be done to ensure that managing a park's VIP program is not just one of several collateral duties."

"Only one?? We have a large and growing volunteer program, but management does not take into account the amount of time it takes to administer the program. It is a collateral duty for me, and I do not have the time available that I need to devote to the program. The funding for program expenses also has not been increased in the last ten years, and is completely insufficient. Also, the guidelines for how VIP funds can be used need to be revised. But that's three things already. . . !"

"I wish I had more time to spend on the VIP program. I struggle trying to keep up with all the e-mails from region and VIP inquires. I'm away from my computer way too long with other duties that take me out in the field or working the VC desk. With what seem like an ever shrinking staff, additional duties, it's getting more difficult to devote time to the VIP program. We are currently seeking a volunteer outreach coordinator to seek out friends and partners for workload assistance and monetary support. I wonder if other coordinators are experiencing this same concern."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

"Just plain more time! We are staffed too thinly to do the job we could do on the volunteer program. All the training, staff and management support cannot overcome the fact that it is a collateral duty among MANY OTHERS. Volunteers, at the end of the day need staff support!"

Category: Funding

27 (12%) commented on financial support and budgeting issues of the VIP program.

Comments include:

"Our program has been growing by leaps and bounds, but we still only have \$2500 budgeted each year to operate it. There should be a system in place that would allow the size of the budget to mirror the size of the program."

"I think we need better support from regional offices and WASO. A better understanding should be provided about how VIP funds are allocated and the process should be servicewide rather than being left in the hands of each region to decide on the allocation. Regional offices should seek more active input from the parks in managing the program."

"It would be more beneficial to our VIP program if our VIP funds did not have to pay for campsites at our own area. We do not get enough VIP funding as it is. More than half of our money ends up going back to pay for lodging and campsites in our own facilities. We have less funds for VIP supplies, uniforms and travel allowances."

Category: Rewards and Recognition

26 (11.5%) commented on difficulties in the system of recognizing and rewarding VIPs, with frequent mention of the problem of feeding volunteers.

Comments include:

"Remove the restriction against purchasing food for VIP recognition events. It is the single most-asked question from parks. "

"We need better communication and standards. For example, what is the master ranger corps? We've received patches for this corps, but no instructions on how to become one. We get conflicting answers on program management--patches are to be handed out to every participant or patches are part of the uniform and should be used as such. A volunteer is supposed to work 30 hours in exchange for housing or hook-ups. Some parks do not follow this standard and others make volunteers work more. This makes it very hard to justify our policy, when it is supposed to be a service wide policy."

"Management (park and regional level) needs to support the VIP program overtly. Our supt's office rarely sees volunteers at work, attends recognition ceremonies, etc. Volunteers need to know they are supported and appreciated by the "front office."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Training

23 (10%) commented on the need for additional training for VIP managers.

Comments include:

"There should be designated funding sources for park VIP managers to attend training. I have never had the benefit of formal training on managing a volunteer program. Also, this survey was very frustrating because my answers to many questions would have differed greatly depending on whether we were talking about long or short-term VIPs (we have both) and what division they were working with. Overall our Resource Management and Interpretation divisions are very supportive of VIP projects, our Maintenance, Protection and Administration divisions are not. Also, individual VIP supervisors have widely differing skills when training, leading and retaining VIPs. Some are excellent, others leave much to be desired."

"More training for VIP management staff and park management staff on how to recruit and utilize volunteers effectively."

"More training semi annually for new staff and seasoned staff to update their knowledge on new NPS procedures. Creating a Parkwide Volunteer Newsletter would be a good idea to help inform other parks about what a similar park is doing and to add a little friendly competition to inspire park volunteer coordinators. "

"(1) More frequent training courses for VIP Coordinators (each Region should offer at least one a year for new Coordinators; perhaps a refresher or advanced course for longtime VIP Coordinators). Also, more information-sharing between VIP Coordinator. (newsletter, perhaps).&CR;(2) This survey as an evaluation tool needs to be re-worked. Several of the questions are unclear; an option for "do not understand question" is advised for any kind of accurate data to be collected."

Category: VIP program reporting and technology

19 (8.5%) commented on the need to improve online reporting and technology support.

Comments include:

"Reporting VIP statistics using the new online annual report program is very difficult; last year regional folks had to help me because the system kept locking up, wouldn't accept my password, etc. I was told that my park couldn't get any additional regional VIP funds - we get \$1500 annually, the lowest in our region - until there was a servicewide VIP program increase. Amazingly that happened last year, but our park still didn't see any additional funding. The big parks with big VIP numbers get the most money, which is OK to a point. However, the little parks or new parks need a decent amount to establish programs, say \$3000 annually, to run good programs as well. Our region put the money into a pot that parks competed for, which didn't help the recurring problem of not having enough funds each year just to keep things going. I skipped the question about how much FTE is currently obligated to the VIP program, because your lowest number is 1/4 or 25%. Like many other parks, my park management won't even designate my VIP Coordinator position as a collateral duty with 20% time devoted to the program. I'm supposed to spend about 10% of my time on VIP efforts, but it's usually

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

closer to 25% at certain times of the year. VIP Coordinators should definitely be designated collateral duty positions!!! I had to laugh at the question about whether I attend management meetings or provide input to the superintendent - does this really happen at most parks? It definitely doesn't happen here!!! It is depressing how little REAL management support - not lip service - there is for the VIP program here, not like in other parks I've worked at."

"Providing advice/tips/recommendations for smaller parks with limited staffing. We have better results when we recruit volunteers on a focused project or need, however for smaller parks, that's not always possible. Most smaller parks are also in a very remote area, volunteers are still looking for "stipends" to off set costs of living in a remote area. &As for reporting efforts, it would be really nice to go on-line and report volunteer hours by name, park, hours donated etc much similar to the monthly reporting we do on-line for the Monthly Public use Report, a report on visitation to the park."

Category: Recruitment (includes information technology support)

17 (7.5%) commented on improvements needed in the recruitment process.

Comments include:

"We need to improve on local area recruitment. Currently we send PRs to local papers and recruit at college fairs, but I would like to begin recruiting at local area meetings, ex, AARP. The additional targeted recruitment will allow us to not only increase local volunteerism, but will allow us to increase volunteer diversity. We are also working on formalizing volunteer training park-wide. I have also been wanting to create a volunteer webpage/s for our park site...the new volunteer.gov/gov site though has been a great help in recruiting volunteers. I have a lot of ideas concerning ways to expand our program, create new opportunities, recruit more....etc....but often, as a front line interpreter, find I do not have the time to do all I want and could do to significantly improve our program....this can be distressing - lost opportunities."

"My comments are based on being a Volunteer Coordinator for six years at a large site which has a very big volunteer program. The supporting websites are useless. Other than downloading a form, I have never used the VIP Page on NPS Intranet, InsideNPS. Actually, I did not even know the website existed until our webmaster helped me find the forms. Three of the categories on the left do not have any entries. I do not see how this website is useful to me. It has much of the same information as www.nps.gov/volunteer. Our reporting website, www.inside.nps.gov/volunteer is not useful. I do not have a problem completing form 10-150. But, what is the purpose of the other categories in the 'Administration' section? Maybe I need training on using these websites. Why would I waste my time registering my volunteer names, awards, funding, etc? I thought we were going to be able to track volunteer hours with some type of program provided on the Intranet. I think everything about "Take Pride in America" was a waste of money. Nothing has proven useful to me. We do not conduct volunteer events that can be funded or placed on a silly calendar due to the remoteness of our site. I do not know how else this TPIA stuff is used. The TPIA brochures, that must cost a ton of money to produce, are ridiculous. What do I do with them? Oh, we get some silly piece of paper that says our volunteers are nationally recognized if they have worked 3000 or 4000 or more hours. It is not even signed by someone we know. Who cares?"

Category: Working Relationships

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

15 (6.5%) commented on the need for improvement of working relationships between volunteers and NPS staff, including specific requests for clarifying policy regarding volunteers replacing paid staff.

Comments include:

"Getting paid staff to realize that volunteers are not "displacing" paid staff. In our area, it is low income and high unemployment. Particularly folks in maintenance who are local refuse to speak to maintenance volunteers because they feel that if the volunteer wasn't willing to work for no pay, their friend, neighbor, or family member would have a paying job here. Maintenance won't use individual volunteers anymore. Resource management won't use volunteers because they feel their work "deserves" to be paid but "anyone" can work with visitors."

"It seems to me, unfortunately, that the NPS is coming to the point where we depend upon VIPs instead of Interpretive Park Rangers. The evidence is there that VIPs, and SCA's to some extent, are taking the jobs from and replacing "Park Rangers". This is an unfortunate circumstance from the current administration, and the real sad thing is, a precedent has been set. I am proud to be the manager of a NPS VIP program, however, am not proud of the stance our NPS leaders have taken towards Interpretive Park Rangers. I am the first person to agree upon the value of VIPs, however, I am also one of the first people you will talk to that will condemn the inconsideration and total disrespect the NPS leaders have taken towards the men and women that have dedicated our lives to a way of life "to protect and preserve". Our career has basically been "done away with".

"It's very hard to limit this to one improvement because I would like to see lots of things improve. However, a chronic problem for me is working with park staff. My supervisor is not really involved with my VIP duties at all, though I do get feedback on occasion from my division chief. But I have a difficult time with other staff members too. I don't get agreement forms from staff members who supervise volunteers in a timely way (or sometimes at all) and I have a lot of trouble getting information at the end of the year for my reports. I try to make sure staff are informed about what I am doing and what I need from them using email and the park intranet site and I have attended the weekly park management meetings to make sure division chiefs are aware of what I'm doing, but nothing seems to make much difference. So although my program is growing every year and volunteers are accomplishing a lot, I feel a need for more cooperation and communication between myself and those who work with volunteers."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP LINE STAFF COMMENTS Q 51.

Q 51. Thinking about the VIP program describe one thing that works well.

Of 1132 entries, many of which hold multiple examples of what is going well, 40% of the replies were coded and sorted.

Sample size: 452

Of 452 of the coded replies:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

266 (59%) commented on how well the program is administered on a local, regional and national level, and how essential the program is to the mission of the NPS.

Comments include

"That the VIPs that are chosen are intense in the cause of preserving cultural artifacts and hold the NPS Mission to the highest of standards. VIPs are intense and selfishly give a lot of their personal time and resources because they are dedicated and truly believe the NPS is a worthy cause."

"It's a win-win situation: Volunteers get satisfaction doing something to help NPS, while NPS gains from their work. The VIP program is set up well, making it easy to have volunteers work here."

"Providing internship programs that offer opportunities to college students. The VIPs program is a great way to make young folks passionate about the NPS and build future employees and future constituents."

"Enables retirees to come back and serve their government and provide expertise services (for FREE) when funding is tight within all government agencies."

Category: Rewards and Recognition

35 (8%) commented on how well the NPS recognizes and rewards volunteers.

Comments include:

"Most volunteers I have met are proud of the pins, patches, and other tokens they receive at VIP recognition dinners each year."

"Our recognition program works very well. We usually have a time for the volunteers and recognize, with a gift, what each has done. Everyone seems very pleased with setting aside specific times for recognition."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

"The awards program for the VIPs is an excellent tool. They are shown that their work is appreciated and that they are valued. I think they are treated like NPS employees rather than just VIPs."

Category: Working Relationships

34 (7.5%) commented on how well volunteer and NPS staff work together

Comments include:

"In our program, there is a wonderful appreciation for our VIPs. They are respected for all they do and give to NPS. It's a great relationship between employees and volunteers."

"We really enjoy the international program. The entire staff takes on the volunteers as if they are part of the family. The volunteers we have had have been excellent workers and have been rewarded by not only praise at work, but have developed great friendships with our staff. In the past, the staff has taken them on vacations, dinner and entertainment, and many other fun activities. Due to the nature of our office, they have been able to travel to several parks and see a little bit of the region surrounding us."

Category: Volunteer Attitudes

24 (5%) commented on how volunteer's attitudes affected the public's appreciation of the park system.

Comments include:

"VIP interaction with the public is excellent. Because they are here on their own time, they are very happy to interact with the visitors. They also have a clear message which they like to send to the visitor. A happy, encouraging VIP makes a better experience for the visitor and the staff alike. Also, the communication and interaction amongst the VIPs themselves is excellent, especially since for the most part they are here for the interaction with others that they would not otherwise have."

"Volunteers are terrific for providing a presence in the park that can not always be accomplished by just the employees alone."

"For the most part, the volunteers have a great attitude and work ethic and help the parks immensely."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP LINE STAFF COMMENTS Q 52

Q 52. Thinking about the VIP program describe one improvement you would recommend

Of 1100 entries, many of which held multiple recommendations for improvement 50% of the replies were coded and sorted.

Sample size: 461

Out of 461 replies, many of which hold multiple examples of what needs improvement:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

164 (35.5%) commented on Supervision/Management issues, many of which addressed the need to improve communication between NPS staff and volunteers and problems managing the program in general.

Typical Comments include:

"The program only allows VIPs to do work that NPS employees do not do, or that is not in an NPS job description. This severely limits my departments using volunteers since most anything we ask them to do to help employees is part of the job."

"More auditing by supervisors. I don't think its appropriate for online Rangers to audit VIPs. I think that our VIPs are now audited only if there is a problem. I think audits should be done routinely to monitor for content, style and effectiveness. Most of our VIPs are great interpreters, but some bring or develop bad habits that would be inappropriate for online Rangers to point out. I also think that the VIPs are in a unique position to provide feedback about our I and VS programs and should be routinely surveyed by management for their ideas."

"Management needs to understand there is a large time investment necessary to appropriately supervise "free" labor."

"Expanding volunteer opportunities in parks is a workload increase - something that can not be met in the face of continuing paid staff reductions forced by declining budgets (in real dollar effect terms)."

Additionally, the need to diversify the volunteer base was frequently mentioned.

"It is hard to increase diversity when many minorities can not afford to volunteer due to some correlation with lower economic status."

"I would like to see improved outreach efforts aimed at encouraging young people to volunteer. All of the VIPs at my park are much older. It would be fun and useful to have younger people around, and it would (hopefully) encourage a spirit of stewardship and responsibility among those young people."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Training

69(15%) commented on the need for additional training for Volunteers, as well as for the people managing them.

Comments include:

"Better training for employees dealing with volunteers. More time for the VIP Coordinator to do his job. He is pulled in so many directions, things fall through the cracks. We have great volunteers, but they can not replace the knowledge, skills and abilities of NPS staff. (Some volunteers work well; others are just killing time.)"

"Annual training for ALL permanent staff on the proper way to seek out, utilize, train and track VIPs."

"Some volunteers describe confusion regarding a clear and concise work plan upon being "hired" as volunteers, and may receive information several weeks after assignment."

"I would like to have more supervision training to help me interact better with volunteers who work with me. I feel I could especially use help with group supervision. I've had no kind of supervisory training at all and yet am expected to work with volunteers on an almost daily basis. Need some help with interpersonal skills."

Category: Recruitment (includes information technology support)

64 (14%) commented on improvements needed in the recruitment process

Comments include:

"Better ways to market the entire program to visitors. I've noticed the extensive advertisement for the US Army or other governmental departments, but little or no marketing about the NPS or volunteer program. Is there a way to link all of the national initiatives together to the NPS volunteer program and present to the public the many opportunities to get the community involved in volunteering? Also by fixing www.volunteer.gov/gov to work better in the digital world. There are still many bugs in the system that need to be corrected to adequately support the needs of the volunteer program. In addition, more funding would need to be provided."

"1) Getting the word out to the local communities about what type of volunteer positions are available and how much the Park could use their help - Advertise - if a volunteer knows what the Park is looking for they may be able to make their skills available and 2) Make the employees aware that training the volunteers is something encouraged and not a drain on their time or talents. Help the employees know that taking the time to train these volunteers is considered part of the NPS mission. Encourage them to work with the volunteers so that eventually the volunteer can work 'on his own' and the employee's time is freed up for other essential work to be completed."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

"Make an agency-wide volunteer network. The newsletter is a good idea, but along with that a forum through which volunteers at different parks can communicate. Many volunteers spend their time in parks for the idea of camaraderie and interaction. Increase that aspect by letting them communicate with each other across the country, sharing experiences and ideas. Some VIPs need encouragement and what better way then to have their peers tell them about their great experiences and the impact that they can make. A newsletter will have to be both electronic and paper-based because of the wide gap in age and experience with computers and the internet. In order to be all-inclusive (which means keeping those 70 and 80 year-old volunteers in the loop), a newsletter would have to be paper-based as well."

"Better targeted recruitment-- targeting skill and experience areas, as well as diversity. However, need to increase support for diverse volunteers prior to more active recruitment (i.e. establish a mentor program for minorities, foreign volunteers, others who may not easily fit in culturally with the local site)."

"The Baby Boom population, just reaching the beginning of their retirement years, has a tremendous passion toward their NPS and can bring a wealth of expertise, maturity, and work ethic to the NPS at a time when it is sorely needed. A special focus should be placed on recruiting, placement, and appropriate leadership of this high potential group. And...we need to find more challenging opportunities than just campground hosts. Look to Saguaro National Park for an example of an outstanding VIP program that places a high emphasis on recruiting retirees for a vast array of challenging opportunities."

Category: Rewards and Recognition

61 (13%) commented on difficulties in the system of recognizing and rewarding VIPs, with frequent mention of the problem of reimbursing volunteers for food, housing or stipends.

Comments include:

"I would make sure that the VIPs clearly understand what compensation they are entitled to prior to their arrival. We have had a few volunteers who misunderstood what they would be paid and left shortly after their arrival, because of that situation. Having participated myself through the SCA program, I know how important it is to know exactly what your compensation is going to be so that you can realistically decide if the experience you will receive as a volunteer is equal to what it is likely to cost your financially."

"VIPs are important, but when we furnish them with housing, it seems to defeat the purpose of saving the NPS money. The benefiting account has to pay for the housing."

"I believe they should be paid a salary of at least minimum wage for the hours they work. Most of these volunteers work very hard and ours work 8 hrs a day for only the cost of a meal and mileage. The ones I work with usually get \$10 for a meal and \$10 to \$15 for their travel, it adds up to about \$3 an hour for an 8 hour day. I know they are volunteers but their time is really worth more than what they are currently receiving-financially anyway."

"Our volunteer coordinator has had the job for over 15 years. It is stale and this park asks the volunteers to stay too long and then gives them a cheap "pot luck" dinner and a certificate, which is a sad joke. The whole

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

program could use a renewal. Thanks. I think volunteers are great and should be treated much better and truly utilized for their great talents and expertise. I have heard some employees say that "volunteers are out to take away jobs", this is absurd..."

Category: Working Relationships

26 (5.5%) commented on the need for improvement of working relationships between volunteers and NPS staff, specifically the need to clarify policy regarding volunteers replacing paid staff.

Comments include:

"There is fear among the staff that jobs are being filled with volunteers. There are certain things that volunteers are not allowed to do since they do not have keys to open and close buildings, safe combinations, etc. That puts stress on the paid staff to do these things in buildings that are run by volunteers and are scattered over a vast area with many miles between the buildings."

"In my 16+ years I have seen the volunteer role evolve to replace many of the functions that NPS staff previously performed. Although a cost saving measure, we ask too much of the VIPs and work them too many hours each week."

"Too many jobs are being done by volunteers that should be completed by paid staff. Volunteers should never take the place of paid employees. While volunteering can be a beneficial activity, it is relied upon far too much to complete the NPS mission. Why do we use volunteers to do jobs such as visitor contact that paid staff should do?"

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

82. Thinking about the VIP program describe one thing that works well.

83. Thinking about the VIP program describe one improvement you would recommend.

Intentionally left blank-- to be filled in by VIP staff.

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP VOLUNTEERS COMMENTS Q 57

57. Thinking about the VIP program describe one thing that works well. (Please limit your response to 30 words or less)

Total 2552 responses, many of which hold multiple examples of what is going well, 21% of the replies were coded and sorted.

Sample size 552

Out of 552 entries, many of which hold multiple examples of what is going well:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

316 (57%) commented on how well the program is administered on a local, regional and national level, and how essential the program is to the NPS. Other frequent comments in this category were about flexibility and diversity of jobs available.

Comments include

"In my 12 years of service with the CVSR, CUVA crew, Trailblazers and CVNPA, the NPS has without fail been helpful, kind, and safety minded."

"- clear duties and responsibilities set forth upon entering the position.;- equal treatment to that of a real employee;- communication between volunteer and leader/supervisor cannot be stressed enough."

"For me the best part was that they listened to my desire for what I wanted - Keep busy & use my skill set. I didn't want to sit around waiting for something to do. They are organized & have a list for me to do when I arrive each time. This is a good use of my time & I know it helps them."

"Our park relies on volunteers and entrusts them with duties that add value to the program and NPS on the whole. We are made to feel important because our work is so NEEDED."

"I think it is great that NPS allows the Boy Scout to use this as an opportunity to perform service projects. It is a great learning experience that produces visible results at the parks, as well as growth in the boys that lead and participate in the project."

"The program gives retirees the opportunity to give something back to their country."

"The results: the volunteers are getting the job done, or at least, showing the way. We are talking (here) about part of the gardens at Melrose, in Natchez."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Working Relationships

121 (22%) commented on how well volunteer and NPS staff work together.

Comments include:

"The integration of volunteers into the flow of activity at the park I worked at was solid & seamless. I appreciated being treated as a regular staff member - both in terms of being respected and having expectations for my work."

"The NPS staff are always very open to hearing the volunteers' input and/or concerns and always lets us know how we are appreciated."

"The genuinely friendly and helpful demeanor of the NPS volunteers coordinator and supporting NPS staff. All showed interest and respect for my efforts to the particular site."

"NPS staff leadership in my position has been outstanding, optimizing my ability to hone and extend my skills. They have extended to me exceptional generosity with their time and resources, which, in turn, strengthens my commitment to serving NPS and WRST National Park & Preserve."

"Working as a VIP at 3 different parks I have developed a great respect for the permanent staff members (underpaid and overworked)."

Category: Training

38 (7%) commented on the importance and success of volunteer training in the VIP program.

Comments include:

"The orientation, safety (ATV) program and all printed material have been relevant, and helpful. The volunteer program coordinator has always articulated his message to each volunteer."

"Training is excellent, as is "spirit" of the group of volunteers. It is clear that the volunteers are very appreciated & volunteer input is taken seriously"

"Training and education is the best. I have learned so much by being a volunteer."

"Excellent VIP co-coordinator-organizes 3 days of seminars at the beginning of volunteer season-very helpful in getting to know your job and the park"

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Rewards and Recognition

26 (5%) commented on how well the NPS recognizes and rewards volunteers.

Comments include:

"The volunteer program was well organized - gave one a sense of community with pot luck dinners plus an awards dinner - felt very much appreciated for out time and effort."

"NHS superintendent is always involved with volunteer activities and appreciates their involvement by saying "Thank you"."

Category: Volunteer Attitudes

16 (3%) commented on the positive attitudes of volunteers

Comments include:

"My self-esteem and confidence was improved by my volunteering. I feel good to be giving back. These were unexpected bonuses."

"Committed NPS staff inspire volunteers and the "oh, wow" attitude of volunteers reminds staff why they are there."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

VIP VOLUNTEERS COMMENTS Q 58

58. Thinking about the VIP program describe one improvement you would recommend. (Please limit your response to 30 words or less)

Total **2360** responses, many of which hold multiple examples of what needs improvement, 20% of the replies were coded and sorted.

Out of **468** entries, many of which hold multiple examples of what needs improvement:

Category: Program Supervision/Management

187 (40%) commented on the need to improve how the program is administered on a local, regional and national level. Other frequent comments in this category were about the need for improved communication between volunteers and NPS management.

Comments include

"Each Park volunteer program is unique to that Park. The only thing that, as a volunteer, I appreciate is NPS/Volunteer communication. The more communication between the two, the better the volunteer attitude and work performance."

"1. Giving volunteers a voice in activity planning, a volunteer coordination committee if you will. only 1 allowed?
2. Reaching out to potential volunteer organizations [i.e. boy scouts] 3. Listening to volunteer ideas [not working around here]. 4. Stop shutting things down without giving volunteer's a chance to do something. 5. Better communications between organizations. 6. Stop shutting down volunteer organizations within the park."

"I think having a more precise plan of action and a step by step process that reaches a larger long-term goal that is specific for a volunteer would make volunteering easier and feel more productive."

"The NPS is critically short of paid staff; more permanent, paid staff would lead to better coordination and use of available volunteers' contributions."

"There is going to have to be some way of attracting young folks to be volunteers as the current "doers" are aging out."

"Form a "volunteer committee" (3-4 members) to give "feedback/new ideas" to Superintendent....Also consider: mismanagement of volunteers; little or no recognition; poorly informed/trained poor leadership; NPS managers "look down" on volunteers as idiots!; and I continue to volunteer despite the NPS attitude/use toward volunteers at MNBPs; My experience w/NPS management and "leadership" capability is of a very negative impression. I believe this survey will not change anything!"

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

"The requirement that each volunteer work 30 or 32 hours per week to "pay" for their campsite is excessive. A more reasonable amount would be 18 to 20 hours per week. Many volunteers are retirees that are 60-70-or in their 80's. 32 hours per week is too long to be on their feet at that age. This requirement must have been suggested by someone in their 20's or 30's. Or someone in their 40's or 50's that sit at a desk all day. At that estimated 'value' of \$10.00/Hour the campsite would equal \$600.00/week!"

Category: Rewards and Recognition

62 (13%) commented on the need to better recognize and reward volunteers.

Comments include:

"Institute a program that would allow VIP entry to other parks without charge or at a discounted rate. I have 2800 volunteer hours. Recently I paid \$16(2) to enter another park in this area."

"Superintendent does not show appreciation on a regular basis - mostly at annual party. Asks for input and disregards it without feedback. He should speak to each VIP at least monthly."

"Expand the program with additional funding in terms of stipends, housing, and other incentives because these programs and efforts are really having a positive effect for the people of the U.S."

"Award volunteers for the time that they put in. It isn't fair to give someone who puts in 10 hours a year the same as someone who puts in over 700 hours. Give recognition to those who go the extra mile."

Category: Funding

44 (9.5%) commented on the need for more funding to strengthen and expand the VIP program.

Comments include:

"Provide more resources to the NPS coordinator. It appears that she is very limited in dollars and staff to run the program. However, she does an excellent job on the resources available."

"That the park service not have the budget so thin that it is difficult to run a program and fully support the volunteer program."

"The VIP program, like the rest of the NPS, needs realistic financing, or our parks won't be around for the next generation. "Privatization" is a cruel and irreversible joke. (Pave Paradise, put in a parking lot?)"

"I'm sure all parks/sites could use more money to supply the needs of the site. I wish the congress felt the need as strongly as most VIPs do."

Volunteers-In-Parks Program Assessment Report

Category: Training

30 (6.5%) commented on the need for improved training in the VIP program, both for the volunteers and the VIP managers and coordinators.

Comments include:

"Insist that NPS personnel and bio-techs learn more about identifying the wildlife and wildlife activities in their areas of expertise. Increase training in these areas so NPS employees can fill-in for and better assist volunteers in identification when nature subjects are the subjects of program interests."

"Seek to train line managers on potential value and opportunities using volunteers at Parks without good volunteer programs."

"I WAS HIRED TO DO A JOB ONCE THE PERSON LEFT THE HIRED ME THE JOB LEFT WITH THEM. I NEVER DID THE JOB I WAS HIRED FOR I ALSO NEVER LEARNED THE THINGS THE PARK AGREED TO HAVE ME DO AND LEARN I WAS TOLD MANY THINGS THAT NEVER HAPPENED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I AM PISSED OFF I FEEL I WASTED MY TIME WITH THE PARK I FEEL I COULD OF LEARNED A LOT DID A LOT I WILL MOST LIKELY NEVER VOLUNTEER AGAIN I FEEL VERY INSULTED AND HURT I WAS A VIP IN ALASKA"

MISC

It is important to note here that out of 468 coded replies 58 (12%) people replied that there was no need to "improve" the VIP program.

This opinion was typified by the following comments:

"don't fix it 'cause it ain't broke"

"I cannot think of anything. The people are delightful, the program is significant and meaningful and it is something I would

PAY to do. (I volunteer at the Mississippi River Journey in MN and it is WONDERFUL.)"